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WITHDRAWN

REPRESENTATIVE ONE-ACT PLAYS BY CONTINENTAL AUTHORS

By Montrose J. Moses

Representative British Dramas
Representative Continental Dramas
Representative American Dramas
Representative Continental One-act Plays
Henrik Ibsen: The Man and His Plays
A Treasury of Plays for Children
Another Treasury of Plays for Children
The American Dramatist

By M. J. Moses and V. Gerson

Clyde Fitch and His Letters

REPRESENTATIVE ONE-ACT PLAYS BY CONTINENTAL AUTHORS

SELECTED, WITH BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

BY

MONTROSE J. MOSES

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1929

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Representative one-act plays by continental authors

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To

D. H. M.

I DEDICATE ALL THINGS

M. J. M.

THE ONE-ACT PLAY

In the short space of time that the one-act play has flourished as a definite dramaturgic form, it has resulted in a surprising amount of good literature. Only a form that has vitality in itself can create so high a standard in so short a period. It was born of an atmosphere of experimentation; it does not count as its progenitor those short skits with which our fathers were regaled, either before or after the enactment of a tragedy. Nor can one believe that the fragments which have from time to time filled our vaudeville programmes are quite in the same line of development.

The long drama bears the same relationship to the one-act play that the novel does to the short story. In both instances there is similarity of detail, but difference of species; similarity of architecture, yet variance of plan and diversity of means; likeness of content, yet separate intensities. What it is that prompts a playwright to put his theme in a short form is partly inherent in him and partly woven into the theme itself. How often have we seen long plays, thin in narrative and motivation, spread lightly through three acts — often skilfully spread, but none the less attenuated, when they would have gained in strength and vividness by compression.

It is a dangerous thing to make general statements about any form of literature; for exceptions may prove or disprove the rule. At one time it was thought that writing for children was merely a cutting down of the author's genius to the limited comprehension of the child mind. One might just as well infer, so I recall an indignant writer declaring in a mid-Victorian issue of the *Quarterly Review*, that, in order to let kittens crawl through a hole in the wall, it would be

necessary to cut another opening than that through which the mother cat was wont to go. A one-act play is not a long drama diluted, any more than a child's book is a grown one diluted. The technique differs, though the art feeling that produces each is integrally true, calling for no diminution of expertness, no relinquishment of unity, no incompleteness of characterization, no weakness of *mood*. There should be nothing threadbare, nothing fragmentary about the one-act play. Believe otherwise, and you might with justice formulate the axiom that a four-act play is a series of four one-act dramas, which is totally false in its premise. Take a large picture and compare it with a *genre* canvas, take a portrait and put it beside a miniature: they have their different integrities, their different tones, their different sweeps of treatment; the brushes with which they are done are not the same, though they are both brushes; their values of color are different, though each is paint; their atmospheres are different because of the variances of distance through which they are seen. Cause and effect, ways and means, premises and conclusions differ.

It might almost seem at times as though there are two differing workmen in the short-story writer and the novelist, in the miniature artist and the mural painter of broad canvasses, in the dramatist and the one-act play writer. De Maupassant and O. Henry, Synge and Dunsany are short-form artists, supreme in their line, unerring in their handling of materials, happiest in compression.

I do not say that a short-story writer will never be a novelist; literary history proves the contrary. And so in the drama field. The one-act playwright sometimes has the good fortune to create as happily in the larger mold, as instance J. M. Barrie. But it is only within recent years that the one-act play, worthy in itself of perfection, and sufficiently effective to bring the author fame, has taken its legitimate place by the side of the short story with the reading public.

If there are not many of such plays in America and Eng-

land being written by the well-known dramatists, that is because of economic conditions which restrict the remunerative returns, in comparison with the longer drama. It has been pointed out more than once that where such a form as this has no theater it may call definitely its own, where it has to creep in as a mere filler to a substantial offering, there is little encouragement for its maintenance, or for experimentation in its form. On the Continent, there seems to be a much more definite place, economically, for it in the amusement régime. It is not too much to believe that, had it not been for the amateur movement in American theatrical history, there would have been little or no incentive to develop the form: the little theaters, the workshops, the high school devotion to theatricals, the technical courses in the art of the theater, — all these elements have conduced to cutting a channel in theater affairs for the encouragement of the one-act play. Dunsany, Eugene O'Neill, Susan Glaspell and others have first won distinction in this way. While George Middleton and Percival Wilde have been the salvation of the amateur by their proof, in their work, that excellent writing, in short compass, can be made technically suitable for undeveloped resources.

The two volumes — in a series of which the present one is a third — that have already been published: Miss Mayorga's "Representative One-Act Plays by American Authors", and Mr. Clark's "Representative One-Act Plays by British and Irish Authors", are excellent measure of the hold and extent of this form of drama. The present Editor cannot but feel, after a careful survey of the European field — with all the importance it attaches to the one-act play as a popular form — that the English and Irish examples of the shorter dramaturgy reveal a skill far in advance of the Continental workmen, except Schnitzler. This may be because, to the foreign author, the one-act form is merely a by-product, his greatest loyalty being pledged to the long drama; it may also be due to the fact that the music-hall license in Spain, in Germany, in France, in Italy gave freedom and a

fragmentary haste to technique. We also find in England that such men as Pinero and Jones, Granville-Barker and Galsworthy have never built as well in the one-act form as in the long play. Oscar Wilde, in spite of "Salomé", is not a natural exponent of the technique; and most of the dramatists in the present volume have won their greatest distinction in other channels. The one-act technique has found itself, but the one-act play has not yet found its place.

It is possible to be a dramatist of full dimensions and yet build in the so-called diminutive form with power and art. In fact, there is no justified supposition that the one-act play should not be written with power and art. On the Continent, the one-act drama has grown out of definite movements, from organizations devoted to the true interests of such a play, no matter what its length, just so it has power and just so the manner in which that power is maintained results in a work of art. It will be seen that just as the three-, four- and five-act convention has held the stage for years, and just as the one-act experiment has proven itself both legitimate and adequate, another form is proving itself equally as potent, — the two-act drama, of which Anatole France's "The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife" is a worthy example, and in which the Spanish dramatists excel. In other words, it is very apparent that a play should be as long as its theme warrants, in order to be consonant with its inherent power and artistry. And the time is coming when the theater will be able to arrange an evening's entertainment sufficiently flexible to take care of a programme of varying length plays. In the past, the chief argument against a series of one-act plays on the same bill has been the demand made on an audience to adjust itself repeatedly to different atmospheres, characters and motives — thus breaking the evening's unity of interest into fragments. The one-act programme was attempted by Holbrook Blinn's effort to transplant the Grand Guignol idea to the New York Princess Theatre. Excellent attempts have been made by the Washington Square Players, the Province-

town group, the Wisconsin Players and the Harvard Workshop to encourage one-act dramas, and with excellent results.

Another form, the sequence play, has to be noted, as an offshoot of the one-act form, where extension of mood puts it in the one-act class, but shifting of scene necessitates a physical shifting of attention. Such plays as O'Neill's "Emperor Jones" and "The Hairy Ape", Schnitzler's "Anatol" and "Reigen", and Andreyev's "The Life of Man" are striking examples.

For some time, while there were many experiments in the writing of one-act plays, there were no exponents of its art philosophy; such stray essays as were written by men like Strindberg and Evréinov are not known to the general reader. There are many good books on dramatic technique, but, while there has been a superficial treatment of the one-act play in B. Roland Lewis's "The Technique of the One-Act Play", and a recent series on the subject, published in the Drama League official organ, *The Drama* (Chicago), there is still needed a treatise such as Percival Wilde's recently announced volume, which shows not only catholicity of taste in selection, clarity of statement and extent of perspective in illustration, but also some comprehension — from a full possession of a sense of the theater — of the difficulties as a worker within the form itself, — the problems with which a writer is confronted from within.

There are dramatists who, like Charles Rann Kennedy, will demonstrate clearly that a one-act play may be broken up into a definite division of five parts, like a five-act drama, the curve of interest having as many points in each, during the development and solution of the plot. There are dramatists, like Percival Wilde, who are convinced that the technique of the one-act play, while it may have to take cognizance of the principles underlying all plays, has, of itself, dilemmas and requirements equally as distinctive as the longer drama, yet separate. Certain it is that much trivial matter is turned out in the short form, merely because of a foggy understanding of the rules of the game. Now

that there is a body of dramaturgy in the field, there should be some clear examination into the values of the one-act play, and a formula deduced therefrom for the ambitious student.

The present volume has to do only with plays by Continental authors. There are many plays which should be made available to English readers, who are cut aloof from a knowledge of them because of the handicap of a strange language. There is little or nothing to be had of Gustav Wied or Frank Wedekind. And the Editor had to arrange for the hitherto unpublished adaptation of "The Birthday Party", by Hjalmar Bergström. The initial source of encouragement for all plays of a foreign nature was *Poet Lore* in this country, in the back numbers of which magazine may be found embedded dramas of all nationalities, variously translated. The unfortunate thing is that translation calls for a middleman between author and reader. We were fortunate, in the instance of Ibsen, in having William Archer's workmanlike interpretations which, even though, as some Scandinavians agree, they fall short of the original, at least convey a sense of the living speech of men and women. That cannot always be said of translation; we are favored if we are given the plots, unmolested by the hand of the translator or adapter.

Yet it must be said that since the pioneer efforts of *Poet Lore*, the English reader has had made available to him a large assortment of foreign plays. The Russians are being generously familiarized. John Garrett Underhill has done much to place the drama of Spain in its rightful place. Italy is being represented, though not as fully as should be. While such definitive editions as Ludwig Lewisohn's "Dramatic Works of Hauptmann" and Mrs. Daingerfield Norman's "Plays of Edmond Rostand" are of inestimable value. The field of French drama has yet to be fully and sympathetically explored. Through the enthusiasm of Barrett H. Clark, "Three Modern Plays from the French", "Contemporary French Dramatists" and "Four Plays of the Free Theatre" have helped to break ground. Now

and again our stage is given a French play, but so altered to suit popular consumption as to be hardly recognizable. One has to know François de Curel, Georges de Porto-Riche, Paul Hervieu, Lavedan, Maurice Donnay, Alfred Capus and Henry Bataille in isolation, not in their full body of dramatic composition, or even as part of the creative stream of which they are so significant an element. Had it not been for the prefatory advocacy of Bernard Shaw, and his imitation of the thesis form in "The Doctor's Dilemma", I doubt whether Eugène Brieux's dramas would be as familiar to English readers as they are. Nevertheless, since Professor Brander Matthews wrote his volume, "French Dramatists of the Nineteenth Century", the boundaries of understanding French drama have been extended.

It is, however, strange that popular study of the theaters of all countries has created a demand for the general book, rather than for the specific subject. I recall two volumes, P. P. Howe's "The Repertory Theatre" and Desmond McCarthy's "The Court Theatre", which in the English development are of character most needed in the development of the foreign theater. It seems to me that if Weygandt's "Irish Plays and Playwrights" and Lady Gregory's "Our Irish Theatre" have been popular, then certainly a volume on "The Manchester Repertory" or on "The London Stage Society" would be equally as significant. If Huntley Carter's "The Theatre of Max Reinhardt" is of service, why not the "Theatre of Antoine"? I remember with pleasure my first reading of Percival Pollard's "Masks and Minstrels", which traced so ebulliently the sway of the Überbrettl' movement in Germany, out of which came Hartleben, Bierbaum, Wedekind, Schnitzler and Von Hofmannsthal, all of whom cried aloud against the suburbanism of Ibsen. Why, I ask of Mr. Underhill, is there not a similar volume dealing with the popular taste of Spain, where the development of the one-act play has been coincident with the rise of special theaters created — at cheap price — for their encouragement, and for which Martínez Sierra, the Quinteros Broth-

ers and Echegaray wrote especially? Surely the local color is there for a fascinating analysis of the racial psychology of amusement.

Through such volumes as Oliver Sayler's "The Russian Theatre under the Revolution" and Bakshy's "The Path of the Modern Russian Stage" we are being put in touch with the social conditions and the demands of individual artists, from which national drama is evolved. We can the better, through such work, understand the hold of Tchekoff, Andreyev and the Russian Ballet; we can the more distinctly evaluate the intensity of Russian music from such specific treatment. But why, with so much talk of the *commedia dell' arte*, as sponsoring the one-act farce, has some one not specifically analyzed it, rather than given its history in thesis fashion? The answer to all this may be — and it is a healthy and legitimate answer — that, barring a general comprehension of the life-stream out of which the one-act play is evolved, we are more concerned with the creative impulse than with the critical examination of it.

None the less, for students concerned in the choice of subject-matter for their college research work, the field of drama affords a rich and ample opportunity. There is, in theatrical books published, too much duplication of discussion about the theater to-day, the theater advancing, the theater to-morrow, the art theater, the exemplary theater and the insurgent theater. But the fact that such discussions multiply is indication that, in America, change from an old order is imminent. The change is taking place in so live a manner and with such perceptible strides that one can be forgiven keeping a quick eye on the present, a speculative eye on the future, while reserving penetrating judgment for the day when a sound body of criticism, esthetic as well as dramatic, will endeavor to weld all this activity into a comprehensive whole.

I do not believe that the modern one-act play is a recrudescence of any old form; it has come out of a modern realistic impulse, just as the short story has. It is a form which has

grown around a philosophical attitude toward life. This attitude affected the longer plays as well, but the "slice of life" interest in which Antoine's coterie revelled, the café and *Simplicissimus* revelry from which the Uberbrettl' art sprang, the psycho-physico considerations which attracted Strindberg and Ibsen are direct consequences of the shock from romanticism and the "well-made play" theory.

We might, therefore, date the rise of the one-act play as beginning in 1887, when bourgeois André Antoine, with some idle pennies saved from his salary at the Paris Gas Works, launched the Théâtre-Libre. It was after this that we had Lugné-Poë, that J. T. Grein began his Independent Theatre in London. It was of this period that Holbrook Jackson wrote so vividly in "The Eighteen-Nineties."

The present Editor has in preparation a collection of Representative Continental Dramas, which will be a companion volume to his Representative British Dramas: Victorian and Modern. In this he will attempt, through a series of interpretative essays, to convey a more critical point of view of the social forces which have marked the development of modern European drama since Ibsen. The one-act play is, in comparison with the fuller form, only a shoot from the parent stem. The ground-plan for the book here offered has been set by the two volumes already published. But, in relation to the anthology of large plays in preparation, it is supplementary, at the same time that it is independent.

The method of selection has been somewhat limited by what is available in English translation; in several instances special translations and adaptations have been arranged for. The varying limitations of versions are necessitated by the differing views of the obligations confronting a translator. Unfortunate that there is not an international bureau of translating, where "rules for the game" might be formulated for the protection of the foreign author, and for the discontinuance of differing translations of the same play! In some instances, the translations are as multifarious as

the spelling of the names of Andreyev and Tchekoff. None can go far wrong if they abide, in their interpretative work — that is all a translation can purport to be — with the formula set by Edwin Björkman who, in his preface to Strindberg's "Miss Julia", asserts that not only is the task of the translator to be faithful to his original, but to realize that in all drama, dialogue springs from the lips of living men and women. The conscientiousness of Maeterlinck is seen in what he wrote of his translation of "Macbeth":

"It is that secret life which it is important to understand and to reproduce as well as one can. Extreme prudence is required, since the slightest false note, the smallest error, may destroy the illusion and destroy the beauty of the finest page."

The Editor has tried to avoid duplication of material in other anthologies so far published, and he believes that, except in a few instances, he has succeeded in using dramas that, though not entirely new, are novel and now brought together for the first time from unusual sources. They are all, so he believes, definitely representative of the best that has been written in the European one-act province, and in their variety illustrate the theater tendencies out of which they were given birth.

MONTROSE J. MOSES.

"OLD WELL",
NEW HARTFORD,
CONNECTICUT,
June 15, 1922.

PREFATORY NOTE

Dramas that are gathered from various sources require pleasant correspondence and association with their authors before the final contents are determined upon. Hence, one of the most satisfactory obligations confronting the Editor of an anthology is to thank those through whose coöperation he is able to bring his work to a fruitful issue. Methods of work and policies of selection are bound up in courteous consent.

To the Editor and Publisher of *Poet Lore*, to the Stewart & Kidd Company and to E. P. Dutton & Company, I am greatly beholden for the readiness with which they responded to my requests for rights to certain text. In particular I wish to thank Mr. Edwin Björkman, who advised me on Scandinavian drama, Mr. John Garrett Underhill, whose interest in the representation of Spain has resulted in such satisfactory choice, Mr. Percival Wilde for advice on many matters pertaining to drama in France, and, finally, M. André de Lorde, whose consent makes available for the first time an effective representative play from the repertory of the Grand Guignol. To my publishers, likewise, I owe gratitude for their constant interest and helpfulness.

M. J. M.

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REPRESENTATIVE ONE-ACT PLAYS BY CONTINENTAL AUTHORS

COUNTESS MIZZIE

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

(1862–)

To understand Schnitzler, one must study the essence of Viennese life, the reaction of the æsthetic cynic toward it. Volatile expression, light love, a pervasive wickedness are the ingredients which best reveal him and it. His dialogue, his character, his situation are clever and attractive, no matter how unhealthy the human nature he depicts. He seems to have extracted the very heart of Vienna, — its cosmopolitan complexion, its sparkle, its disillusionment, its bitter irony. The fact of his being a physician — which has given him opportunity for studying the complexes of sex — may have added to his ironic treatment of the eternal triangle.

He was born at Vienna, in 1862, the son of a physician. He took his doctor's degree in 1885, and from 1886 to 1888 he served at the General Hospital in Vienna. His practice became extensive.

His touch is that of the miniature artist, — colorful, light; the sparkle of wine to it, which has none of the thick obfuscation of deep problems. As one commentator has remarked: Though devoted to the complications of sociological sex, "he does this, however, neither with the maenadic frenzy of Strindberg, nor with the thaumaturgic humanitarianism of Shaw, but in a mood more indicative of the sweet melancholy of a De Musset." Schnitzler in his plays, says another, has all the seduction of a Viennese waltz, — formal, polite, overpowering, physical. While another speaks of the finesse of the philandering mind with which he

deals. "Anatol" and "The Countess Mizzie" are the epitome of his reactions to Viennese society. Sheer magic, say those who have observed the peccadillos of the foreign aristocracy.

Percival Pollard, in his appreciative sketch of "Vienna's Essence", declares that Schnitzler's "eroticism is far more insidious than the brutalities of Wedekind." In other words he enchants by his deft licentiousness. Even the mathematical formula of his sequence plays, however ironic its futile circle, is theatrically attractive, and "Reigen" might be another "This Is the House That Jack Built", applied to amatory hide-and-go-seek. Even "slices of life" may be arranged in patterns of frail cumulative relationship.

Schnitzler knows all the Old World's sophistication, and he treats it with infinite art and sparkle. The "Countess Mizzie" reveals him at his most subtle Viennese pitch. It is both Schnitzler and Vienna.

In comparison with the Schnitzler "essence", read Hermann Bahr's "The Concert" and Franz Molnar's "Liliom." A sympathetic valuation of Schnitzler's work as a whole is contained in Ludwig Lewisohn's "The Modern Drama."

WORKS

Anatol. Seven Dramatic Scenes. 1889–1891; 1893. Paraphrased by H. Granville-Barker. Little, Brown and Company, Boston. Produced at the Little Theatre, New York, 1913.

A Piece of Fiction. 1891; 1894.

Paracelsus. Verse play in one act. 1892; 1899. See translated version by Horace B. Samuel, noted below in "The Green Cockatoo."

Amours. 1894; 1896. Translated by Bayard Q. Morgan, as "Light-o'-Love", *Drama*, Vol. 7, 32, Chicago, August, 1912. Produced at the German Irving Place Theatre, 1896. In English, presented by Katherine Grey as "The Reckoning", 1907.

Outside the Game Laws. 1896; 1897.

Change Partners! Ten dialogues. 1896–1897; 1903.

The Legacy. 1897; 1898. Translated by Mary L. Stephenson, *Poet Lore*, Boston, 1911.

The Life Partner. 1898; 1899. One act.

The Green Cockatoo. Grotesque in one act. 1898; 1899. Produced in New York, at the Irving Place Theatre, 1907–1908. In English, by Mrs. Minnie Maddern Fiske, on tour, 1910. A translation is contained in a volume by Horace B. Samuel, with "Paracelsus" and "The Companion", London, 1913; also Chicago, McClurg. It is published under the title of "The Duke and the Actress", translated by Hans Weysz, in *Poet Lore*, Vol. 21, 257–284, Boston, July, 1910. It is also contained, in translation, in Kuno Francke's "German Classics", Vol. 20, 289–331.

The Veil of Beatrice. 1899; 1900.

The Lady with the Dagger. 1900; 1902. One act. Translated by Helen T. Porter, *Poet Lore*, No. 2, Vol. 15, 1–18, Boston, 1904. See also *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 91, 1179–1191, n.s. 85, London, June, 1909; translated by H. B. Samuel. Also *International*, Vol. 4, 92–94, November, 1911.

Hours of Life. 1901; 1902. One act. Translated by Helen T. Porter, *Poet Lore*, Boston, 1906. Translated by Grace I. Colbron, in her volume, "Anatol and Other Plays", containing also "The Green Cockatoo." Miss Colbron's version is used by T. H. Dickinson, in his collection of "Chief Contemporary Dramatists", Second Series. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

End of the Carnival. 1901; 1902. One act.

Literature. Farce in one act. 1901; 1902. In Kuno Francke's "German Classics", Vol. 20, 332–359; translated by A. I. du P. Coleman. Also in "Comedies of Words and Other Plays", Englished by Pierre Loving (with Introduction). Stewart & Kidd Company, Cincinnati, 1917. Also in Frank Shay's "Fifty Contemporary One-Act Plays."

The Puppet Player. A study in one act. 1902; 1906.

The Gallant Cassian. Puppet play in one act. 1903; 1906.

Translated by Adam L. Gowans, London, 1914, in a volume containing also "The Puppet Player" and "The Great Puppet Show." Is the libretto of a musical comedy, with music by Strauss.

The Lonely Way. 1903; 1904. Translated by Edwin Björkman. Little, Brown and Company, Boston.

Intermezzo. 1904; 1905. Translated by Edwin Björkman. Little, Brown and Company, Boston.

The Greatest Show of All. Burlesque in one act. 1904; 1906.

The Call of Life. 1905; 1906.

Countess Mizzie. 1909; 1909. One act. Translated by Edwin Björkman. Little, Brown and Company, Boston.

Young Medardus. A history in five acts and a prologue. 1909; 1910.

The Veil of Pierrette. Comic opera in three acts. Music by Ernst von Dohnnanyi. 1909.

The Vast Country. A tragi-comedy. 1910; 1911.

Professor Bernhardi. 1912; 1912. Produced in German, 1914.

Gesammelte Werke. Theater-Stücke. 4 volumes. 1912.

COUNTESS MIZZIE

OR

THE FAMILY REUNION

(*Komtesse Mizzi oder der Familientag*)

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

BY ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY

EDWIN BJÖRKMAN

Characters

COUNT ARPAD PAZMANDY
MIZZIE, his daughter
PRINCE EGON RAVENSTEIN
LOLO LANGHUBER
PHILIP
PROFESSOR WINDHOFER
WASNER
THE GARDENER
THE VALET

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COUNTESS MIZZIE

The garden of Count Arpad. In the background, tall iron fence. Near the middle of this, but a little more to the right, there is a gate. In the foreground, at the left, appears the façade of the two-storied villa, which used to be an imperial hunting lodge about 180 years ago and was remodeled about thirty years ago. A narrow terrace runs along the main floor, which is raised above the ground. Three wide stairs lead from the terrace down to the garden. French doors, which are standing open, lead from the terrace into the drawing-room. The windows of the upper floor are of ordinary design. Above that floor appears a small balcony, to which access is had through a dormer-window. This balcony holds a profusion of flowering plants. A garden seat, a small table and an armchair stand under a tree at the right, in the foreground.

Count enters from the right; he is an elderly man with gray mustaches, but must still be counted decidedly good-looking; his bearing and manners indicate the retired officer; he wears a riding suit and carries a crop.

VALET (*entering behind the Count*). At what time does Your Grace desire to have dinner to-day?

COUNT (*who speaks with the laconism affected by his former colleagues, and who, at that particular moment, is engaged in lighting a huge cigar*). At two.

VALET. And when is the carriage to be ready, Your Grace?

MIZZIE[1] (*appearing on the balcony with a palette and a bunch of brushes in one hand, calls down to her father*). Good morning, papa.

COUNT. Morning, Mizzie.

[1] Diminutive of Maria.

MIZZIE. You left me all alone for breakfast again, papa. Where have you been anyhow?

COUNT. Most everywhere. Rode out by way of Mauer and Rodaun.[1] Perfectly splendid day. And what are you doing? At work already? Is there anything new to be seen soon?

MIZZIE. Yes, indeed, papa. Nothing but flowers though, as usual.

COUNT. Isn't the professor coming to see you to-day?

MIZZIE. Yes, but not until one.

COUNT. Well, don't let me interrupt you.

[*Mizzie throws a kiss to him and disappears from the balcony.*

COUNT (*to the valet*). What are you waiting for? Oh, the carriage. I'm not going out again to-day. Joseph can take a holiday. Or wait a moment. (*He calls up to the balcony*) Say, Mizzie —

[*Mizzie reappears on the balcony.*

COUNT. Sorry to disturb you again. Do you think you'll want the carriage to-day?

MIZZIE. No, thank you, papa. I can think of nothing — No, thanks.

[*She disappears again.*

COUNT. So Joseph can do what he pleases this afternoon. That's — oh, see that Franz gives the nag a good rubbing down. We got a little excited this morning — both of us.

[*Valet goes out. Count sits down on the garden seat, picks up a newspaper from the table and begins to read.*

GARDENER (*enters*). Good morning, Your Grace.

COUNT. Morning, Peter. What's up?

GARDENER. With Your Grace's permission, I have just cut the tea roses.

COUNT. Why all that lot?

[1] Small towns south of Vienna. The subsequent reference to the Tiergarten shows that the Pazmandy residence must be in the little suburb of Lainz, at the extreme southwestern corner of Vienna. Near the Tiergarten there is actually an imperial hunting lodge, which the playwright seems to have appropriated for his purpose.

GARDENER. The bush is full up. It ain't wise, Your Grace, to leave 'em on the stem much longer. If maybe Your Grace could find some use —

COUNT. Have n't got any. Why do you stand there looking at me? I'm not going to the city. I won't need any flowers. Why don't you put them in some of those vases and things that are standing about in there? Quite the fashion nowadays, is n't it? (*He takes the bunch of flowers from the gardener and inhales their fragrance while he seems to be pondering something*) Wasn't that a carriage that stopped here?

GARDENER. That's His Highness' pair of blacks. I know 'em by their step.

COUNT. Thanks very much then.

[*He hands back the roses. Prince comes in by the gate. Count goes to meet him.*

GARDENER. Good morning, Your Highness.

PRINCE. Hello, Peter.

[*Gardener goes out toward the right.*

Prince wears a light-colored summer suit; is fifty-five, but doesn't look it; tall and slender; his manner of speech suggests the diplomat, who is as much at home in French as in his native tongue.

COUNT. Delighted, old chap. How goes it?

PRINCE. Thanks. Splendid day. (*Count offers him one of his gigantic cigars*) No, thank you, not before lunch. Only one of my own cigarettes, if you permit.

[*He takes a cigarette from his case and lights it.*

COUNT. So you 've found time to drop in at last. Do you know how long you have n't been here? Three weeks.

PRINCE (*glancing toward the balcony*). Really that long?

COUNT. What is it that makes you so scarce?

PRINCE. You must n't mind. But you are right, of course. And even to-day I come only to say good-by.

COUNT. What — good-by?

PRINCE. I shall be off to-morrow.

COUNT. You're going away? Where?

PRINCE. The seashore. And you — have you made any plans yet?

COUNT. I have n't given a thought to it yet — this year.

PRINCE. Well, of course, it 's wonderful right here — with your enormous park. But you have to go somewhere later in the summer?

COUNT. Don't know yet. But it 's all one.

PRINCE. What 's wrong now?

COUNT. Oh, my dear old friend, it 's going downhill.

PRINCE. How? That 's a funny way of talking, Arpad. What do you mean by downhill?

COUNT. One grows old, Egon.

PRINCE. Yes, and gets accustomed to it.

COUNT. What do you know about it — you who are five years younger?

PRINCE. Six almost. But at fifty-five the springtime of life is pretty well over. Well — one gets resigned to it.

COUNT. You have always been something of a philosopher, old chap.

PRINCE. Anyhow, I can't see what 's the matter with you. You look fine.

[*Seats himself; frequently during this scene he glances up at the balcony; pause.*

COUNT (*with sudden decision*). Have you heard the latest? She 's going to marry.

PRINCE. Who 's going to marry?

COUNT. Do you have to ask? Can't you guess?

PRINCE. Oh, I see. Thought it might be Mizzie. And that would also — So Lolo is going to marry.

COUNT. She is.

PRINCE. But that 's hardly the "latest."

COUNT. Why not?

PRINCE. It 's what she has promised, or threatened or whatever you choose to call it, these last three years.

COUNT. Three, you say? May just as well say ten. Or eighteen. Yes, indeed. In fact, since the very start of this affair between her and me. It has always been a fixed

idea with her. "If ever a decent man asks me to marry him, I'll get off the stage *stante pede*." It was almost the first thing she told me. You have heard it yourself a couple of times. And now he's come — the one she has been waiting for — and she's to get married.

PRINCE. Hope he's decent at least.

COUNT. Yes, you're very witty! But is that your only way of showing sympathy in a serious moment like this?

PRINCE. Now!

[*He puts his hand on the Count's arm.*

COUNT. Well, I assure you, it's a serious moment. It's no small matter when you have lived twenty years with somebody — in a *near*-marital state; when you have been spending your best years with her, and really shared her joys and sorrows — until you have come to think at last, that it's never going to end — and then she comes to you one fine day and says: "God bless you, dear, but I'm going to get wedded on the sixteenth —" Oh, damn the whole story! (*He gets up and begins to walk about*) And I can't blame her even. Because I understand perfectly. So what can you do about it?

PRINCE. You've always been much too kind, Arpad.

COUNT. Nothing kind about it. Why shouldn't I understand? The clock has struck thirty-eight for her. And she has said adieu to her profession. So that anybody can sympathize with her feeling that there is no fun to go on as a ballet-dancer retired on half pay and mistress on active service to Count Pazmandy, who'll be nothing but an old fool either, as time runs along. Of course, I have been prepared for it. And I haven't blamed her a bit — 'pon my soul!

PRINCE. So you have parted as perfect friends?

COUNT. Certainly. In fact, our leave-taking was quite jolly. 'Pon my soul, I never suspected at first how tough it would prove. It's only by degrees it has come home to me. And that's quite a remarkable story, I must say.

PRINCE. What 's remarkable about it?

COUNT. I suppose I had better tell you all about it. On my way home that last time — one night last week — I had a feeling all of a sudden — I don't know how to express it — tremendously relieved, that 's what I felt. Now you are a free man, I said to myself. Don't have to drive to Mayerhof Street [1] every night God grants you, merely to dine and chatter with Lolo, or just sit there listening to her. Had come to be pretty boresome at times, you know. And then the drive home in the middle of the night, and, on top of it, to be called to account when you happened to be dining with a friend in the Casino or taking your daughter to the opera or a theater. To cut it short — I was in high feather going home that night. My head was full of plans already — No, nothing of the kind you have in mind! But plans for traveling, as I have long wanted to do — to Africa, or India, like a free man. — That is, I should have brought my little girl along, of course. — Yes, you may well laugh at my calling her a little girl still.

PRINCE. Nothing of the kind. Mizzie looks exactly like a young girl. Like quite a young one. Especially in that Florentine straw hat she was wearing a while ago.

COUNT. Like a young girl, you say! And yet she's exactly of an age with Lolo. You know, of course! Yes, we're growing old, Egon. Every one of us. Oh, yes — And lonely. But really, I did n't notice it to begin with. It was only by degrees it got hold of me. The first days after that farewell feast were not so very bad. But the day before yesterday, and yesterday, as the time approached when I used to start for Mayerhof Street — And when Peter brought in those roses a moment ago — for Lolo, of course — why, then it seemed pretty plain to me that I had become a widower for the second time in my life.

[1] A street in the district of Wieden, near one of the principal shopping districts and leading to the great Theresian Riding Academy.

Yes, my dear fellow. And this time forever. Now comes the loneliness. It has come already.

PRINCE. But that 's nonsense — loneliness!

COUNT. Pardon me, but you can't understand. Your way of living has been so different from mine. You have not let yourself be dragged into anything new since your poor wife died ten years ago. Into nothing of a serious nature, I mean. And besides, you have a profession, in a sense.

PRINCE. Have I?

COUNT. Well, as a member of the Upper House.

PRINCE. Oh, I see.

COUNT. And twice you have almost been put into the cabinet.

PRINCE. Yes, almost.

COUNT. Who knows? Perhaps you will break in some time. And I'm all done. Had myself retired three years ago in the bargain — like a fool.

PRINCE (*with a smile*). That's why you are a free man now. Perfectly free. With the world open before you.

COUNT. And no desire to do a thing, old man. That 's the whole story. Since that time I have n't gone to the Casino even. Do you know what I have been doing the last few nights? I have sat under that tree with Mizzie — playing dominoes.

PRINCE. Well, don't you see? That 's not to be lonely. When you have a daughter, and particularly such a sensible one, with whom you have always got on so well — What does she say about your staying at home nights anyhow?

COUNT. Nothing. Besides, it has happened before, quite frequently. She says nothing at all. And what could she say? It seems to me she has never noticed anything. Do you think she can have known about Lolo?

PRINCE (*laughing*). Man alive!

COUNT. Of course. Yes, I know. Of course, she must have known. But then, I was still almost a young man when her mother died. I hope it has n't hurt her feelings.

PRINCE. No, *that* would n't. (*Casually*) But being left so much alone may have troubled her at times, I should think.

COUNT. Has she complained of me? There 's no reason why you should n't tell me.

PRINCE. I am not in her confidence. She has never complained to me. And, heavens, it may never have troubled her at all. She has so long been accustomed to this quiet, retired life.

COUNT. Yes, and she seems to have a taste for it, too. And then she used to go out a good deal until a few years ago. Between you and me, Egon, as late as three years ago — no, two years ago — I still thought she might make the plunge after all.

PRINCE. What plunge? Oh, I see.

COUNT. If you could only guess what kind of men have been paying attention to her quite recently.

PRINCE. That 's only natural.

COUNT. But she won't. She absolutely won't. What I mean is, that she can't be feeling so very lonely — otherwise she would — as she has had plenty of opportunity —

PRINCE. Certainly. It 's her own choice. And then Mizzie has an additional resource in her painting. It 's a case like that of my blessed aunt, the late Fanny Hohenstein, who went on writing books to a venerable old age and never wanted to hear a word about marriage.

COUNT. It may have some connection with her artistic aspirations. At times I 'm inclined to look for some psychological connection between all these morbid tendencies.

PRINCE. Morbid, you say? But you can't possibly call Mizzie morbid.

COUNT. Oh, it 's all over now. But there was a time —

PRINCE. I have always found Mizzie very sensible and very well balanced. After all, painting roses and violets does n't prove a person morbid by any means.

COUNT. You don't think me such a fool that her violets and

roses could make me believe — But if you remember when she was still a young girl.

PRINCE. What then?

COUNT. Oh, that story at the time Fedor Wangenheim wanted to marry her.

PRINCE. Oh, Lord, are you still thinking of that? Besides, there was no truth in it. And that was eighteen or twenty years ago almost.

COUNT. Her wanting to join the Ursuline Sisters rather than marry that nice young fellow, to whom she was as good as engaged already — and then up and away from home all at once — you might call that morbid, don't you think?

PRINCE. What has put you in mind of that ancient story to-day?

COUNT. Ancient, you say? I feel as if it happened last year only. It was at the very time when my own affair with Lolo had just begun. Ah, harking back like that! And if anybody had foretold me at the time! You know, it really began like any ordinary adventure. In the same reckless, crazy way. Yes, crazy — that's it. Not that I want to make myself out worse than I am, but it was lucky for all of us that my poor wife had already been dead a couple of years. Lolo seemed — my fate. Mistress and wife at the same time. Because she's such a wonderful cook, you know. And the way she makes you comfortable. And always in good humor — never a cross word — Well, it's all over. Don't let us talk of it. (*Pause*) Tell me, won't you stay for lunch? And I must call Mizzie.

PRINCE (*checking him*). Wait — I have something to tell you. (*Casually, almost facetiously*) I want you to be prepared.

COUNT. Why? For what?

PRINCE. There is a young man coming here to be introduced.

COUNT (*astonished*). What? A young man?

PRINCE. If you have no objection.

COUNT. Why should I object? But who is he?

PRINCE. Dear Arpad — he 's my son.

COUNT (*greatly surprised*). What?

PRINCE. Yes, my son. You see, I did n't want — as I 'm going away —

COUNT. Your son? You've got a son?

PRINCE. I have.

COUNT. Well, did you ever! You have got a young man who is your son — or rather, you have got a son who is a young man. How old?

PRINCE. Seventeen.

COUNT. Seventeen! And you have n't told me before! No, Egon — Egon! And tell me — seventeen? My dear chap, then your wife was still alive.

PRINCE. Yes, my wife was still alive at the time. You see, Arpad, one gets mixed up in all sorts of strange affairs.

COUNT. 'Pon my soul, so it seems!

PRINCE. And thus, one fine day, you find yourself having a son of seventeen with whom you go traveling.

COUNT. So it 's with him you are going away?

PRINCE. I am taking that liberty.

COUNT. No, I could n't possibly tell you. Why, he has got a son of seventeen! (*Suddenly he grasps the hand of the Prince, and then puts his arms about him*) And if I may ask — the mother of that young gentleman, your son — how it happens — as you have started telling me —

PRINCE. She 's dead long ago. Died a couple of weeks after he was born. A mere slip of a girl.

COUNT. Of the common people?

PRINCE. Oh, of course. But a charming creature. I may as well tell you everything about it. That is, as far as I can recall it myself. The whole story seems like a dream. And if it were not for the boy —

COUNT. And all that you tell me only now! To-day only — just before the boy is coming here!

PRINCE. You never can tell how a thing like that may be received.

COUNT. Tut, tut! Received, you say? Did you believe

perhaps — I'm something of a philosopher myself, after all. — And you call yourself a friend of mine!

PRINCE. Not a soul has known it — not a single soul in the whole world.

COUNT. But you might have told me. Really, I don't see how you could — Come now, it was n't quite nice.

PRINCE. I wanted to wait and see how the boy developed. You never can tell.

COUNT. Of course, with a mixed pedigree like that. But you seem reassured now?

PRINCE. Oh, yes, he's a fine fellow.

COUNT (*embracing him again*). And where has he been living until now?

PRINCE. His earliest years were spent a good way from Vienna — in the Tirol.

COUNT. With peasants?

PRINCE. No, with a small landowner. Then he went to school for some time in Innsbruck. And during the last few years I have been sending him to the preparatory school at Krems.[1]

COUNT. And you have seen him frequently?

PRINCE. Of course.

COUNT. And what's *his* idea of it anyhow?

PRINCE. Up to a few days ago he thought that he had lost both his parents — his father as well — and that I was a friend of his dead father.

MIZZIE (*appearing on the balcony*). Good morning, Prince Egon.

PRINCE. Good morning, Mizzie.

COUNT. Well, won't you come down a while?

MIZZIE. Oh, if I am not in the way.

[*She disappears.*

[1] Innsbruck is the capital of the province of Tirol. Krems is a small city on the Donau, not so very far from Vienna, having a fine high school or "gymnasium." The idea is, of course, that as the boy grew up, his father became more and more interested and wanted to have him within easier reach.

COUNT. And what are we going to say to Mizzie?

PRINCE. I prefer to leave that to you, of course. But as I am adopting the boy anyhow, and as a special decree by His Majesty will probably enable him to assume my name in a few days —

COUNT (*surprised*). What?

PRINCE. — I think it would be wiser to tell Mizzie the truth at once.

COUNT. Certainly, certainly — and why should n't we? Seeing that you are adopting him. It's really funny — but, you see, a daughter, even when she gets to be an old maid, is nothing but a little girl to her father.

MIZZIE (*appears; she is thirty-seven, but still very attractive; wears a Florentine straw hat and a white dress; she gives the Count a kiss before holding out her hand to the Prince*). Well, how do you do, Prince Egon? We don't see much of you these days.

PRINCE. Thank you. — Have you been very industrious?

MIZZIE. Painting a few flowers.

COUNT. Why so modest, Mizzie? (*To the Prince*) Professor Windhofer told her recently that she could safely exhibit. Won't have to fear comparison with Mrs. Wisinger-Florian herself.[1]

MIZZIE. That's so, perhaps. But I have no ambition of that kind.

PRINCE. I'm rather against exhibiting, too. It puts you at the mercy of any newspaper scribbler.

MIZZIE. Well, how about the members of the Upper House — at least when they make speeches?

COUNT. And how about all of us? Is there anything into which they don't poke their noses?

PRINCE. Yes, thanks to prevailing tendencies, there are

[1] "Neben der Wiesinger-Florian." The name is slightly misspelt in the German text. It is that of Mrs. Olga Wisinger-Florian, a well-known Viennese painter of floral pieces, whose work is represented in many of the big galleries in Europe. She was born in 1844, made her name in the early eighties, and is still living.

people who would blackguard your pictures merely because you happen to be a countess, Mizzie.

COUNT. Yes, you're right indeed.

VALET (*entering*). Your Grace is wanted on the telephone.

COUNT. Who is it? What is it about?

VALET. There is somebody who wishes to speak to Your Grace personally.

COUNT. You'll have to excuse me a moment. (*To the Prince, in a lowered voice*) Tell her now — while I am away. I prefer it.

[*He goes out, followed by the valet.*

MIZZIE. Somebody on the telephone — do you think papa can have fallen into new bondage already?

[*She seats herself.*

PRINCE. Into *new* bondage, you say?

MIZZIE. Lolo used always to telephone about this time. But it's all over with her now. You know it, don't you?

PRINCE. I just heard it.

MIZZIE. And what do you think of it, Prince Egon? I am rather sorry, to tell the truth. If he tries anything new now, I'm sure he'll burn his fingers. And I do fear there is something in the air. You see, he's still too young for his years.

PRINCE. Yes, that's so.

MIZZIE (*turning so that she faces the Prince*). And by the way, you have n't been here for ever so long.

PRINCE. You have n't missed me very much — I fear — Your art — and heaven knows what else —

MIZZIE (*without affectation*). Nevertheless —

PRINCE. Awfully kind of you.

[*Pause.*

MIZZIE. What makes you speechless to-day? Tell me something. Is n't there anything new in the world at all?

PRINCE (*as if he had thought of it only that moment*). Our son has just passed his examinations for the university.

MIZZIE (*slightly perturbed*). I hope you have more interesting news to relate.

PRINCE. More interesting?

MIZZIE. Or news, at least, that concerns me more closely than the career of a strange young man.

PRINCE. I have felt obliged, however, to keep you informed about the more important stages in the career of this young man. When he was about to be confirmed, I took the liberty to report the fact to you. But, of course, we don't have to talk any more about it.

MIZZIE. He pulled through, I hope?

PRINCE. With honors.

MIZZIE. The stock seems to be improving.

PRINCE. Let us hope so.

MIZZIE. And now the great moment is approaching, I suppose.

PRINCE. What moment?

MIZZIE. Have you forgotten already? As soon as he had passed his examinations, you meant to reveal yourself as his father.

PRINCE. So I have done already.

MIZZIE. You — have told him already?

PRINCE. I have.

MIZZIE (*after a pause, without looking at him*). And his mother — is dead?

PRINCE. She is — so far.

MIZZIE. And forever.

[*Rising.*

PRINCE. As you please.

[*The Count enters, followed by the valet.*

VALET. But it was Your Grace who said that Joseph could be free.

COUNT. Yes, yes, it's all right.

[*Valet goes out.*

MIZZIE. What's the matter, papa?

COUNT. Nothing, my girl, nothing. I wanted to get somewhere quick — and that infernal Joseph — If you don't mind, Mizzie, I want to have a few words with Egon. (*To the Prince*) Do you know, she has been trying to get

me before. I mean Lolo. But she couldn't get the number. And now Laura telephones — oh, well, that's her maid, you know — that she has just started on her way here.

PRINCE. Here? To see you?

COUNT. Yes.

PRINCE. But why?

COUNT. Oh, I think I can guess. You see, she has never put her foot in this place, of course, and I have been promising her all the time that she could come here once to have a look at the house and the park before she married. Her standing grievance has always been that I couldn't receive her here. On account of Mizzie, you know. Which she has understood perfectly well. And to sneak her in here some time when Mizzie was not at home — well, for that kind of thing I have never had any taste. And so she sends me a telephone message, that the marriage is set for the day after to-morrow, and that she is on her way here now.

PRINCE. Well, what of it? She is not coming here as your mistress, and so I can't see that you have any reason for embarrassment.

COUNT. But to-day of all days — and with your son due at any moment.

PRINCE. You can leave him to me.

COUNT. But I don't want it. I'm going to meet the carriage and see if I can stop her. It makes me nervous. You'll have to ask your son to excuse me for a little while. Good-by, Mizzie. I'll be back right away.

[*He goes out.*

PRINCE. Miss Lolo has sent word that she's coming to call, and your papa doesn't like it.

MIZZIE. What's that? Has Lolo sent word? Is she coming here?

PRINCE. Your father has been promising her a chance to look over the place before she was married. And now he has gone to meet the carriage in order to steer her off.

MIZZIE. How childish! And how pathetic, when you come to think of it! I should really like to make her acquaintance. Don't you think it 's too silly? There is my father, spending half his lifetime with a person who is probably very attractive — and I don't get a chance — don't have the right — to shake hands with her even. Why does he object to it anyhow? He ought to understand that I know all about it.

PRINCE. Oh, heavens, that's the way he is made. And perhaps he might not have minded so much, if he were not expecting another visit at this very moment.

MIZZIE. Another visit, you say?

PRINCE. For which I took the liberty to prepare him.

MIZZIE. Who is it?

PRINCE. Our son.

MIZZIE. Are you — bringing your son here?

PRINCE. He'll be here in half an hour at the most.

MIZZIE. I say, Prince — this is not a joke you're trying to spring on me?

PRINCE. By no means. On a departed — what an idea!

MIZZIE. Is it really true? He's coming here?

PRINCE. Yes.

MIZZIE. Apparently you still think that nothing but a whim keeps me from having anything to do with the boy.

PRINCE. A whim? No. Seeing how consistent you have been in this matter, it would hardly be safe for me to call it that. And when I bear in mind how you have had the strength all these years not even to ask any questions about him.

MIZZIE. There has been nothing admirable about that. I have had the strength to do what was worse — when I had to let him be taken away — a week after he was born.

PRINCE. Yes, what else could you — could we have done at the time? The arrangements made by me at the time, and approved by you in the end, represented absolutely the most expedient thing we could do under the circumstances.

MIZZIE. I have never questioned their expediency.

PRINCE. It was more than expedient, Mizzie. More than our own fate was at stake. Others might have come to grief if the truth had been revealed at the time. My wife, with her weak heart, had probably never survived.

MIZZIE. Oh, that weak heart!

PRINCE. And your father, Mizzie. Think of your father!

MIZZIE. You may be sure he would have accepted the inevitable. That was the very time when he began his affair with Lolo. Otherwise everything might not have come off so smoothly. Otherwise he might have been more concerned about me. I could never have stayed away several months if he had n't found it very convenient at that particular moment. And there was only one danger connected with the whole story — that you might be shot dead by Fedor Wangenheim, my dear Prince.

PRINCE. Why I by him? It might have taken another turn. You are not a believer in judgment by ordeal, are you? And the outcome might have proved questionable from such a point of view even. You see, we poor mortals can never be sure how things of that kind are regarded up above.

MIZZIE. You would never talk like that in the Upper House — supposing you ever opened your mouth during one of its sessions.

PRINCE. Possibly not. But the fundamental thing remains, that no amount of honesty or daring could have availed in the least at the time. It would have been nothing but useless cruelty toward those nearest to us. It's doubtful whether a dispensation could have been obtained — and besides, the Princess would never have agreed to a divorce — which you know as well as I do.

MIZZIE. Just as if I had cared in the least for the ceremony!

PRINCE. Oh!

MIZZIE. Not in the least. Is that new to you? Did n't I tell you so at the time? Oh, you'll never guess what might — (*her words emphasized by her glance*) what I — of

what I might have been capable at that time. I would have followed you anywhere — everywhere — even as your mistress. I and the child. To Switzerland, to America. After all, we could have lived wherever it happened to suit us. And perhaps, if you had gone away, they might never even have noticed your absence in the Upper House.

PRINCE. Yes, of course, we might have run away and settled down somewhere abroad. But do you still believe that a situation like that would have proved agreeable in the long run, or even bearable?

MIZZIE. No, I don't nowadays. Because, you see, I know you now. But at that time I was in love with you. And it is possible that I — might have gone on loving you for a long time, had you not proved too *cowardly* to assume the responsibility for what had happened. — Yes, too much of a coward, Prince Egon.

PRINCE. Whether that be the proper word —

MIZZIE. Well, I don't know of any other. There was no hesitation on my part. I was ready to face everything — with joy and pride. I was ready to be a mother, and to confess myself the mother of our child. And you knew it, Egon. I told you so seventeen years ago, in that little house in the woods where you kept me hidden. But half-measures have never appealed to me. I wanted to be a mother in every respect or not at all. The day I had to let the boy be taken away from me, I made up my mind never more to trouble myself about him. And for that reason I find it ridiculous of you to bring him here all of a sudden. If you'll allow me to give you a piece of good advice, you'll go and meet him, as papa has gone to meet Lolo — and take him back home again.

PRINCE. I would n't dream of doing so. After what I have just had to hear from you again, it seems settled that his mother must remain dead. And that means that I must take still better care of him. He is my son in the eyes of the world too. I have adopted him.

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MIZZIE. Have you?

PRINCE. To-morrow he will probably be able to assume my name. I shall introduce him wherever it suits me. And, of course, first of all to my old friend — your father. If you should find the sight of him disagreeable, there will be nothing left for you but to stay in your room while he is here.

MIZZIE. If you believe that I think your tone very appropriate.

PRINCE. Oh, just as appropriate as your bad temper.

MIZZIE. My bad temper? Do I look it? Really, if you please — I have simply permitted myself to find this fancy of yours in rather poor taste. Otherwise my temper is just as good as ever.

PRINCE. I have no doubt of your good humor under ordinary circumstances. I am perfectly aware, for that matter, that you have managed to become reconciled to your fate. I, too, have managed to submit to a fate which, in its own way, has been no less painful than yours.

MIZZIE. In what way? To what fate have you had to submit? Everybody can't become a cabinet minister. Oh, I see — that remark must refer to the fact that His Highness did me the honor ten years ago, after the blissful departure of his noble spouse, to apply for my hand.

PRINCE. And again seven years ago, if you'll be kind enough to remember.

MIZZIE. Oh, yes, I do remember. Nor have I ever given you any cause to question my good memory.

PRINCE. And I hope you have never ascribed my proposals to anything like a desire to expiate some kind of guilt. I asked you to become my wife simply because of my conviction that true happiness was to be found only by your side.

MIZZIE. True happiness! Oh, what a mistake!

PRINCE. Yes, I do believe that it was a mistake at that moment. Ten years ago it was probably still too early. And so it was, perhaps, seven years ago. But not to-day.

MIZZIE. Yes, to-day too, my dear Prince. Your fate has been never to know me, never to understand me at all — no more when I loved you than when I hated you, and not even during the long time when I have been completely indifferent toward you.

PRINCE. I have always known you, Mizzie. I know more about you than you seem able to guess. Thus, for instance, I am not unfamiliar with the fact that you have spent the last seventeen years in more profitable pursuits than weeping over a man who, in all likelihood, was not worthy of you at the time in question. I am even aware that you have chosen to expose yourself to several disillusionments subsequent to the one suffered at my hands.

MIZZIE. Disillusionments, you say? Well, for your consolation, my dear Prince, I can assure you that some of them proved very enjoyable.

PRINCE. I know that, too. Otherwise I should hardly have dared to call myself familiar with the history of your life.

MIZZIE. And do you think that I am not familiar with yours? Do you want me to present you with a list of your mistresses? From the wife of the Bulgarian attaché in 1887 down to Mademoiselle Thérèse Grédun — if that be her real name — who retained the honors of her office up to last Spring at least. It seems likely that I know more than you even, for I can give you a practically complete list of those with whom she has deceived you.

PRINCE. Oh, don't, if you please. There is no real pleasure in knowledge of that kind when you don't uncover it yourself.

[*A carriage is heard stopping in front of the house.*

PRINCE. That's he. Do you want to disappear before he comes out here? I can detain him that long.

MIZZIE. Don't trouble yourself, please. I prefer to stay. But don't imagine that there is anything astir within me. — This is nothing but a young man coming to call on my father. There he is now. — As to blood being thicker than

water — I think it 's nothing but a fairy tale. I can't feel anything at all, my dear Prince.

PHILIP (*comes quickly through the main entrance; he is seventeen, slender, handsome, elegant, but not foppish; shows a charming, though somewhat boyish, forwardness, not quite free from embarrassment*) Good morning.

[*He bows to Mizzie.*

PRINCE. Good morning, Philip. — Countess, will you permit me to introduce my son? This is Countess Mizzie, daughter of the old friend of mine in whose house you are now.

[*Philip kisses the hand offered him by Mizzie; brief pause.*

MIZZIE. Won't you be seated, please?

PHILIP. Thank you, Countess.

[*All remain standing.*

PRINCE. You came in the carriage? Might just as well send it back, as mine is here already.

PHILIP. Won't you come back with me instead, papa? You see, I think Wasner does a great deal better than your Franz with his team of ancients.

MIZZIE. So Wasner has been driving you?

PHILIP. Yes.

MIZZIE. The old man himself? Do you know that 's a great honor? Wasner won't take the box for everybody. Up to about two years ago he used to drive my father.

PHILIP. Oh!

PRINCE. You 're a little late, by the way, Philip.

PHILIP. Yes, I have to beg your pardon. Overslept, you know. (*To Mizzie*) I was out with some of my colleagues last night. You may have heard that I passed my examinations a couple of weeks ago, Countess. That 's why we rather made a night of it.[1]

MIZZIE. You seem to have caught on to our Viennese ways pretty quickly, Mister —

[1] ". . . Ein bissel gedraht." The term is specifically Viennese and implies not only "making a night of it", but also making the contents of that night as varied as the resources of the locality will permit.

PRINCE. Oh, dear Mizzie, call him Philip, please.

MIZZIE. But I think we must sit down first of all, Philip. (*With a glance at the Prince*) Papa should be here any moment now.

[*She and the Prince sit down.*

PHILIP (*still standing*). If you permit me to say so — I think the Park is magnificent. It is much finer that ours.

MIZZIE. You are familiar with the Ravenstein Park?

PHILIP. Certainly, Countess. I have been living at Ravenstein House three days already.

MIZZIE. Is that so?

PRINCE. Of course, gardens cannot do as well in the city as out here. Ours was probably a great deal more beautiful a hundred years ago. But then our place was still practically outside the city.

PHILIP. It's a pity that all sorts of people have been allowed to run up houses around our place like that.

MIZZIE. We are better off in that respect. And we shall hardly live to see the town overtake us.

PHILIP (*affably*). But why not, Countess?

MIZZIE. A hundred years ago these grounds were still used for hunting. The place adjoins the Tiergarten, you know. Look over that wall there, Philip. And our villa was a hunting lodge once, belonging to the Empress Maria Theresa. The stone figure over there goes back to that period.

PHILIP. And how old is our place, papa?

PRINCE (*smiling*). Our place, sonny, dates back to the seventeenth century. Didn't I show you the room in which Emperor Leopold spent a night?

PHILIP. Emperor Leopold, 1643 to 1705. (*Mizzie laughs*) Oh, that's an echo of the examinations. When I get old enough — (*He interrupts himself*) I beg your pardon! What I meant to say was simply — all that stuff will be out of my head in a year. And, of course, when I learned those dates, I did n't know Emperor Leopold had been such a good friend of my own people.

MIZZIE. You seem to think your discovery enormously funny, Philip.

PHILIP. Discovery, you say. Well, frankly speaking, it could hardly be called that.

[*He looks at the Prince.*

PRINCE. Go on, go on!

PHILIP. Well, you see, Countess, I have always had the feeling that I was no Philip Radeiner by birth.

MIZZIE. Radeiner? (*To the Prince*) Oh, that was the name?

PRINCE. Yes.

PHILIP. And, of course, it was very pleasant to find my suspicions confirmed — but I have really known it all the time. I can put two and two together. And some of the other boys had also figured out — that I — Really, Countess, that story about Prince Ravenstein coming to Krems merely to see how the son of his late friend was getting along — don't you think it smacked a little too much of story-book — Home and Family Library, and that sort of thing? All the clever ones felt pretty sure that I was of noble blood, and as I was one of the cleverest —

MIZZIE. So it seems. And what are your plans for the future, Philip?

PHILIP. Next October I shall begin my year as volunteer with the Sixth Dragoons, which is the regiment in which we Ravensteins always serve. And what's going to happen after that — whether I stay in the army or become an archbishop — in due time, of course.

MIZZIE. That would probably be the best thing. The Ravensteins have always been strong in the faith.

PHILIP. Yes, it's mentioned in the Universal History even. They were Catholic at first; then they turned Protestant in the Thirty Years War; and finally they became Catholic again — but they always remained strong in their faith. It was only the faith that changed.

PRINCE. Philip, Philip!

MIZZIE. That 's the spirit of the time, Prince Egon.

PRINCE. And an inheritance from his mother.

MIZZIE. You have been working hard, your father tells me, and have passed your examinations with honors.

PHILIP. Well, that was n't difficult, Countess. I seem to get hold of things quickly. That 's probably another result of the common blood in me. And I had time to spare for things not in the school curriculum — such as horseback riding and —

MIZZIE. And what?

PHILIP. Playing the clarinet.

MIZZIE (*laughing*). Why did you hesitate to tell about that?

PHILIP. Because — Well, because everybody laughs when I say that I play the clarinet. And so did you, too, Countess. Is n't that queer? Did anybody ever laugh because you told him that you were painting for a diversion?

MIZZIE. So you have already heard about that?

PHILIP. Yes, indeed, Countess — papa told me. And besides, there is a floral piece in my bedroom — a Chinese vase, you know, with a laburnum branch and something purplish in color.

MIZZIE. That purplish stuff must be lilacs.

PHILIP. Oh, lilacs, of course. I saw that at once. But I could n't recall the name just now.

VALET (*entering*). There is a lady who wishes to see the Count. I have showed her into the drawing-room.

MIZZIE. A lady? You 'll have to excuse me for a moment, gentlemen.

[*She goes out.*

PHILIP. That 's all right, papa — if it 's up to me, I have no objection.

PRINCE. To what? Of what are you talking?

PHILIP. I have no objection to your choice.

PRINCE. Have you lost your senses, boy?

PHILIP. But really, papa, do you think you can hide anything from me? That common blood in me, you know.

PRINCE. What put such an idea into your head?

PHILIP. Now look here, papa! You have been telling me how anxious you were to introduce me to your old friend, the Count. And then the Count has a daughter — which I have known all the time, by the way — The one thing I feared a little was that she might be too young.

PRINCE (*offended, and yet unable to keep serious*). Too young, you say.

PHILIP. It was perfectly plain that you had a certain weakness for that daughter. Why, you used to be quite embarrassed when talking of her. And then you have been telling me all sorts of things about her that you would never have cared to tell otherwise. What interest could I have in the pictures of a Countess X-divided-by-anything, for instance — supposing even that you *could* tell her lilacs from her laburnums by their color? And, as I said, my one fear was that she might be too young — as my mother, that is, and not as your wife. Of course, there is not yet anybody too young or beautiful for you. But now I can tell you, papa, that she suits me absolutely as she is.

PRINCE. Well, if you are not the most impudent rogue I ever came across! Do you really think I would ask you, if I should ever?

PHILIP. Not exactly ask, papa — but a happy family life requires that all the members affect each other sympathetically, — don't you think so?

[*Mizzie and Lolo Langhuber enter.*

MIZZIE. You must look around, please. I am sure my father would be very sorry to miss you. (*She starts to make the usual introductions*) Permit me to —

LOLO. Oh, Your Highness.

PRINCE. Well, Miss Pallestri —

LOLO. Langhuber, if you please. I have come to thank the Count for the magnificent flowers he sent me at my farewell performance.

PRINCE (*introducing*). My son Philip. And this is Miss —

LOLO. Charlotta Langhuber.

PRINCE (*to Philip*). Better known as Miss Pallestri.

PHILIP. Oh, Miss Pallestri! Then I have already had the pleasure —

PRINCE. What?

PHILIP. You see, I have Miss Pallestri in my collection.

PRINCE. What — what sort of collection is that?

LOLO. There must be some kind of mistake here, Your Highness. I cannot recall —

PHILIP. Of course, you can't, for I don't suppose you could feel that I was cutting out your picture from a newspaper at Krems?

LOLO. No, thank heaven!

PHILIP. It was one of our amusements at school, you know. There was one who cut out all the crimes and disasters he could get hold of.

LOLO. What a dreadful fellow that must have been!

PHILIP. And there was one who went in for historical personalities, like North Pole explorers, and composers and that kind of people. And I used to collect theatrical ladies. Ever so much more pleasant to look at, you know. I have got two hundred and thirteen — which I'll show you sometime, papa. Quite interesting, you know. With a musical comedy star from Australia among the rest.

LOLO. I didn't know Your Highness had a son — and such a big one at that.

PHILIP. Yes, I have been hiding my light under a bushel so far.

PRINCE. And now you are trying to make up for it, I should say.

LOLO. Oh, please let him, Your Highness. I prefer young people like him to be a little *vif*.

PHILIP. So you are going to retire to private life, Miss Pallestri? That's too bad. Just when I might have the pleasure at last of seeing you on those boards that signify the world —

LOLO. That's awfully kind of Your Highness, but unfortunately one hasn't time to wait for the youth that's still growing. And the more mature ones are beginning to find my vintage a little out of date, I fear.

PRINCE. They say that you are about to be married.

LOLO. Yes, I am about to enter the holy state of matrimony.

PHILIP. And who is the happy man, if I may ask?

LOLO. Who is he? Why, he is waiting outside now — with that carriage.

MIZZIE. Why — a coachman?

LOLO. But, Countess — a coachman, you say? Only in the same manner as when your papa himself — beg your pardon! — happens to be taking the bay out for a spin at times. Cab owner, that's what my fiancé is — and house owner, and a burgess of Vienna, who gets on the box himself only when it pleases him and when there is somebody of whom he thinks a whole lot. Now he is driving for a certain Baron Radeiner — whom he has just brought out here to see your father, Countess. And I am having my doubts about that Baron Radeiner.

PHILIP. Permit me to introduce myself — Baron Radeiner.

LOLO. So that's you, Your Highness?

PHILIP. I have let nobody but Wasner drive me since I came here.

LOLO. And under an assumed name at that, Your Highness? Well, we are finding out a lot of nice things about you!

COUNT (*appears, very hot*). Well, here I am. (*Taking in the situation*) Ah!

LOLO. Your humble servant, Count! I have taken the liberty — I wanted to thank you for the magnificent flowers.

COUNT. Oh, please — it was a great pleasure —

PRINCE. And here, old friend, is my son Philip.

PHILIP. I regard myself as greatly honored, Count.

COUNT (*giving his hand to Philip*). I bid you welcome to my house. Please consider yourself at home here. — I don't think any further introductions are required.

MIZZIE. No, papa.

COUNT (*slightly embarrassed*). It's very charming of you, my dear lady. Of course, you know better than anybody that

I have always been one of your admirers. — But tell me, please, how in the world did you get out here? I have just been taking a walk along the main road, where every carriage has to pass, and I didn't see you.

LOLO. What do you take me for, Count? My cab days are past now. I came by the train, which is the proper thing for me.

COUNT. I see. But I hear that your fiancé himself —

LOLO. Oh, he has more pretentious customers to look after.

PHILIP. Yes, I have just had the pleasure of being conducted here by the fiancé of Miss Pallestri.

COUNT. Is Wasner driving for you? Well, that settles it — of course — clear psychological connection! (*Offers his cigar case*) Want a smoke?

PHILIP (*accepting*). Thank you.

PRINCE. But, Philip! A monster like that before lunch!

COUNT. Excellent. Nothing better for the health. And I like you. Suppose we sit down.

[*The Count, the Prince and Philip seat themselves, while Mizzie and Lolo remain standing close to them.*

COUNT. So you 'll be off with your father to-morrow?

PHILIP. Yes, Count. And I 'm tremendously pleased to think of it.

COUNT. Will you be gone long?

PRINCE. That depends on several circumstances.

PHILIP. I have to report myself at the regiment on the first of October.

PRINCE. And it's possible that I may go farther south after that.

COUNT. Well, that's news. Where?

PRINCE (*with a glance at Mizzie*). Egypt, and the Sudan maybe — for a little hunting.

MIZZIE (*to Lolo*). Let me show you the Park.

LOLO. It's a marvel. Ours is n't a patch on it, of course.

[*She and Mizzie come forward.*

MIZZIE. Have you a garden at your place, too?

LOLO. Certainly. As well as an ancestral palace — at Ot-

takring.[1] The great-grandfather of Wasner was in the cab business in his days already.— My, but that's beautiful! The way those flowers are hanging down. I must have something just like it.

COUNT (*disturbed*). Why are the ladies leaving us?

MIZZIE. Never mind, papa, I'm merely explaining the architecture of our façade.

PHILIP. Do you often get visits of theatrical ladies, Count?

COUNT. No, this is merely an accident.

[*The men stroll off toward those parts of the garden that are not visible.*

MIZZIE. It seems strange that I have never before had a chance of meeting you. I am very glad to see you.

LOLO (*with a grateful glance*). And so am I. Of course, I have known you by sight these many years. Often and often have I looked up at your box.

MIZZIE. But not at me.

LOLO. Oh, that's all over now.

MIZZIE. Do you know, I really feel a little offended — on *his* behalf?

LOLO. Offended, you say?

MIZZIE. It will be a hard blow for him. Nobody knows better than I how deeply he has been attached to you. Although he has never said a word to me about it.

LOLO. Do you think it's so very easy for me either, Countess? But tell me, Countess, what else could I do? I am no longer a spring chicken, you know. And one can't help hankering for something more settled. As long as I had a profession of my own, I could allow myself — what do they call it now? — to entertain liberal ideas. It goes in a way with the position I have held. But how would that look now, when I am retiring to private life?

MIZZIE. Oh, I can see that perfectly. But what is *he* going to do now?

LOLO. Why should n't he marry, too? I assure you,

[1] One of the factory districts of Vienna, known chiefly because of the big insane asylum located there.

Countess, that there are many who would give all their five fingers — Don't you realize, Countess, that I, too, have found it a hard step to take?

MIZZIE. Do you know what I have been wondering often? Whether he never thought of making *you* his wife?

LOLO. Oh, yes, that's just what he wanted.

MIZZIE. Why?

LOLO. Do you know when he asked me, the last time, Countess? Less than a month ago.

MIZZIE. And you said no?

LOLO. I did. It would have done no good. Me a Countess! Can you imagine it? I being your stepmother, Countess! Then we could not have been chatting nicely as we are doing now.

MIZZIE. If you only knew how sympathetically you affect me —

LOLO. But I don't want to appear better than I am. And who knows what I might —

MIZZIE. What might you?

LOLO. Well, this is the truth of it. I have gone clear off my head about Wasner. Which I hope won't make you think the worse of me. In all these eighteen years I have had nothing to blame myself with, as far as your dear papa is concerned. But you can't wonder if my feelings began to cool off a little as the years passed along. And rather than to make your dear papa — oh, no, no, Countess — I owe him too much gratitude for that. — Lord!

MIZZIE. What is it?

LOLO. There he is now, looking right at me. (*Mizzie looks in the direction indicated. Wasner, who has appeared at the entrance, raises his tall hat in salute*) Don't you think me an awful fool, Countess? Every time I catch sight of him suddenly, my heart starts beating like everything. Yes, there 's no fool like an old one.

MIZZIE. Old? Do you call yourself old? Why, there can't be much difference between us.

LOLO. Oh, mercy!

[*With a glance at Mizzie.*

MIZZIE. I am thirty-seven — No, don't look at me with any pity. There is no cause for that. None whatever.

LOLO (*apparently relieved*). I have heard some whispers, Countess — of course, I did n't believe anything. But I thank heaven it was true.

[*They shake hands.*

MIZZIE. I should like to congratulate your fiancé right now, if you'll permit me.

LOLO. That 's too sweet of you — but what about the Count — perhaps he would n't like —

MIZZIE. My dear, I have always been accustomed to do as I pleased.

[*They go together toward the entrance.*

WASNER. You're too kind, Countess —

[*The Count, the Prince and Philip have reappeared in the meantime.*

COUNT. Look at that, will you!

WASNER. Good morning, Count. Good morning, Highness.

PRINCE. I say, Wasner, you may just as well take your bride home in that trap of yours. My son is coming with me.

WASNER. Your son?

PHILIP. Why have n't you told me that you were engaged, Wasner?

WASNER. Well, there are things you have n't told, either — Mr. von Radeiner!

COUNT (*to Lolo*). Thank you very much for your friendly visit, and please accept my very best wishes.

LOLO. The same to you, Count. And I must say, that when one has such a daughter —

MIZZIE. It 's too bad I have n't come to know you before.

LOLO. Oh, really, Countess —

MIZZIE. Once more, my dear Miss Lolo, good luck to you!

[*Mizzie embraces Lolo. Count looks on with surprise and some genuine emotion.*

LOLO. I thank you for the kind reception, Count — and good-by!

COUNT. Good-by, Miss Langhuber. I trust you'll be happy — indeed I do, Lolo.

[*Lolo gets into the carriage, which has driven up to the gate in the meantime.*

Wasner is on the box, hat in hand; they drive off.

Mizzie waves her hand at them as they disappear.

PHILIP (*who has been standing in the foreground with the Prince*). Oh, my dear papa, I can see through the whole story.

PRINCE. You can?

PHILIP. This Miss Lolo must be the natural daughter of the Count, and a sister of the Countess — her foster-sister, as they say.

PRINCE. No, you would call that a stepsister. But go on, Mr. Diplomat.

PHILIP. And of course, both are in love with you — both the Countess and the ballet-dancer. And this marriage between the dancer and Wasner is your work.

PRINCE. Go on.

PHILIP. You know — there's something I never thought of until just now!

PRINCE. What?

PHILIP. I don't know if I dare.

PRINCE. Why so timid all at once?

PHILIP. Supposing my mother was not dead —

PRINCE. H'm —

PHILIP. And, through a remarkable combination of circumstances, she should now be going back to the city in the very carriage that brought me out here. And suppose it should be my own mother, whose picture I cut out of that newspaper —

PRINCE. My lad, you'll certainly end as a cabinet minister — Secretary of Agriculture, if nothing better. — But now it's time for us to say good-by.

[*The Count and Mizzie are coming forward again.*

PRINCE. Well, my dear friend, this must be our farewell call, I am sorry to say.

COUNT. But why don't you stay — That would be delightful — if you could take lunch with us.

PRINCE. Unfortunately, it is n't possible. We have an appointment at Sacher's.[1]

COUNT. That 's really too bad. And shall I not see you at all during the Summer?

PRINCE. Oh, we shall not be entirely out of touch.

COUNT. And are you starting to-morrow already?

PRINCE. Yes.

COUNT. Where are you going?

PRINCE. To the seashore — Ostend.

COUNT. Oh, you are bound for Ostend. I have long wanted to go there.

PRINCE. But that would be fine —

COUNT. What do you think, Mizzie? Let's be fashionable. Let's go to Ostend, too.

MIZZIE. I can't answer yet. But there's no reason why you should n't go, papa.

PHILIP. That would be delightful, Countess. It would please me awfully.

MIZZIE (*smiling*). That's very kind of you, Philip.

[*She holds out her hand to him. Philip kisses her hand.*

COUNT (*to the Prince*). The children seem to get along beautifully.

PRINCE. Yes, that's what I have been thinking. Good-by then. Good-by, my dear Mizzie. And good-by to you, my dear old fellow. I hope at least to see *you* again at Ostend.

COUNT. Oh, she 'll come along. Won't you, Mizzie? After all, you can get studios by the seashore, too. Or how about it, Mizzie?

[*Mizzie remains silent.*

PRINCE. Well, until we meet again!

[*He shakes hands with the Count and Mizzie. Philip kisses the hand of Mizzie once more.*

COUNT (*giving his hand to Philip*). It has been a great pleasure.

[1] A fashionable restaurant near the Imperial Palace in the Inner City.

[*The Prince and Philip go out through the gate and step into the carriage, which has been driving up in the meantime, and which now carries them off. The Count and Mizzie come forward again and seat themselves at the table under the tree. Pause.*

COUNT. Has n't this been a queer day?

MIZZIE. All life is queer — only we forget it most of the time.

COUNT. I suppose you 're right. [*Pause.*

MIZZIE. You know, papa, you might just as well have brought us together a little earlier.

COUNT. Who? Oh, you and —

MIZZIE. Me and Miss Lolo. She 's a dear.

COUNT. So you like her? Well, if it were only possible to know in advance — But what 's the use? Now it 's all over. (*Mizzie takes hold of his hand. Count rises and kisses her on the forehead; strolls about aimlessly for a few seconds*) Tell me, Mizzie, what you think. — How do you like the boy?

MIZZIE. Philip? Oh, rather fresh.

COUNT. Fresh, perhaps, but smart. I hope he'll stay in the army. That 's a much more sensible career than the diplomatic service. Slow, but sure. All you need is to live long enough in order to become a general. But a political career — Now look at Egon — three times he has almost become a minister — And suppose he had succeeded? (*Walking back and forth*) Yes, yes — we shall be rather lonely this Summer.

MIZZIE. But why should n't you go to Ostend, papa?

COUNT. Yes, why not? Really, won't you come along? It would be rather — without you, you know. It 's no use looking at me like that. I know! I have n't paid as much attention to you in the past as I should have.

MIZZIE (*taking his hand again*). Oh, papa, you 're not going to apologize, are you? I understand perfectly.

COUNT. Oh, well. But, you see, I shall not get much joy out of that trip without you. And what would you be

doing here, all by yourself? You can't paint all day long.

MIZZIE. The only trouble is — the Prince has asked me to marry him.

COUNT. What? Is it possible? No, you don't mean — And — and you said no?

MIZZIE. Practically.

COUNT. You did? Oh, well — After all, I have never tried to persuade you. It must be as you — But I can't understand why. I have noticed for a long time that he — As far as age is concerned, you wouldn't be badly matched. And as for the rest — sixty millions are not to be despised exactly. But just as you say. (*Mizzie remains silent*) Or could it possibly be on account of the boy? That would be to exaggerate the matter, I assure you. Things of that kind occur in the very best families. And particularly when you consider that his heart always remained with his wife — All of a sudden you get dragged into an affair of that kind without exactly knowing how.

MIZZIE. And some poor girl of the people is thrown aside and allowed to go to the dogs.

COUNT. Oh, please, that's only in the books. And how could he help it? That kind of women seem always to die off early. And who knows what he might have done, if she had n't died — I really think that his action in regard to the boy has been pretty decent. That took courage, you know. I could tell you more than one case. — But don't let us talk of it. If that should be the only thing against him, however — And besides, our being together at Ostend would n't commit you in any way.

MIZZIE. No, that 's true.

COUNT. Well, then — I tell you what. You make the trip with me. And if the place suits you, you can stay. If not, you can go on to London for a visit with Aunt Lora. I mean simply that there is no sense in your letting me go away alone.

MIZZIE. All right.

COUNT. What do you mean?

MIZZIE. I'll go with you. But without any obligation — absolutely free.

COUNT. You 'll come with me, you say?

MIZZIE. I will, papa.

COUNT. Oh, I 'm so glad. Thank you, Mizzie.

MIZZIE. Why should you thank me? It's a pleasure to me.

COUNT. You can't imagine, of course — without you, Mizzie. — There would be so much to remember — this time in particular. You know, of course, that I took Lolo to Normandy last year?

MIZZIE. Of course, I know.

COUNT. And as far as Egon is concerned — not that I want to persuade you by any means — but in a strange place like that you often get more acquainted with a person in a couple of days than during many years at home.

MIZZIE. It's settled now that I go with you, papa. And as for the rest, don't let us talk of it — for the time being.

COUNT. Then, you know, I'm going to telephone to the ticket office at once and reserve sleeping-car compartments for the day after to-morrow — or for to-morrow.

MIZZIE. Are you in such a hurry?

COUNT. What's the use of sitting about here, once we have made up our minds? So I 'll telephone — Does that suit you?

MIZZIE. Yes.

[*Count puts his arms about her. Professor Windhofer appears at the garden gate.*

COUNT. Why, there 's the professor. Have you a lesson to-day?

MIZZIE. I had forgotten it, too.

PROFESSOR (*handsome; about thirty-five; his beard is blond and trimmed to a point; he is very carefully dressed, and wears a gray overcoat; he takes off his hat as he enters the garden and comes forward*) Good morning, Countess. How do you do, Count?

COUNT. Good morning, my dear Professor, and how are

you? You have to pardon me. I was just about to go to the telephone — we are going away, you know.

PROFESSOR. Oh, are you going away? Please, don't let me detain you.

COUNT. I suppose I shall see you later, Professor.

[*He goes into the house.*

PROFESSOR. So you are going away, Countess?

MIZZIE. Yes, to Ostend.

PROFESSOR. That 's rather a sudden decision.

MIZZIE. Yes, rather. But that's my way.

PROFESSOR. That means an end to the lessons for the present, I suppose? Too bad.

MIZZIE. I don't think I shall be able to-day even — I am feeling a little upset.

PROFESSOR. Do you? — Well, you look rather pale, Maria.

MIZZIE. Oh, you think so?

PROFESSOR. And how long will you be gone?

MIZZIE. Until the fall probably — perhaps until very late in the fall even.

PROFESSOR. Then we can resume our lessons next November at the earliest, I suppose?

MIZZIE (*smiling*). I don't think we shall —

PROFESSOR. Oh, you don't think so?

[*They look hard at each other.*

MIZZIE. No, I don't.

PROFESSOR. Which means, Maria — that I am discharged.

MIZZIE. How can you put it that way, Rudolph? That is not quite fair.

PROFESSOR. Pardon me. But it really came a little more suddenly than I had expected.

MIZZIE. Better that than have it come too slow. Don't you think so?

PROFESSOR. Well, girl, I have no intention whatever to make any reproaches.

MIZZIE. Well, you have no reason. And it would n't be nice, either.

[*She holds out her hand to him.*

PROFESSOR (*takes her hand and kisses it*) Will you please excuse me to the Count?

MIZZIE. Are you going already?

PROFESSOR (*unconcernedly*). Is n't that better?

MIZZIE (*after a pause, during which she looks straight into his eyes*). Yes, I think so.

[*They shake hands.*

PROFESSOR. Good luck, Maria.

MIZZIE. Same to you — And remember me to your wife and the children.

PROFESSOR. I won't forget, Countess.

[*He goes out.*

Mizzie remains on the same spot for a little while, following him with her eyes.

COUNT (*on the terrace*). Everything is ready. We'll leave at nine-thirty to-morrow night. — But what has become of the professor?

MIZZIE. I sent him away.

COUNT. Oh, you did? — And can you guess who has the compartment between yours and mine? — Egon and his young gentleman. Won't they be surprised, though?

MIZZIE. Yes — won't they?

[*She goes into the house.*

CURTAIN

DEATH AND THE FOOL

HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL

(1874–)

Hugo von Hofmannsthal's name stands for all that opposes naturalism; it is associated with what, in the literary life of the Continent, was considered most daringly experimental. He has drawn from his influences and his models what best suited his temperament. Oscar Wilde's "Salomé" started him on the road toward pathological studies of the past; hence his "Electra" is not that of Sophocles, but a heroine viewed from his own subjectivity.

Under the spell of Maeterlinck, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Verhaeren, Whitman, Nietzsche, and Novalis, he developed a sensitiveness which entangled his carefully chosen words in a mesh of mysticism and nerves. Born in Vienna, February 1, 1874, he studied at the University of Vienna, specializing in languages, and being profoundly affected by Goethe, the French Symbolists, and D'Annunzio. Of the wealthy, leisure class — aristocratic — he humored his talent in the direction of a philosophical pessimism which could not square the actual world with the ideal world conjured up in the poet's imagination. Some critic calls his early style "virtuosity which could not conceal paucity of idea."

When one considers that, in 1889, the old Freie Bühne was established, it is easy to determine the atmosphere which fostered the early art of Von Hofmannsthal. He wrote poetry under the leadership of Stefan George; he published anonymously under the various pseudonyms of "Loris" and "Theophil Morren"; he became one of the distinguishing

marks of the younger Viennese, who must have been moved by the same over-refined egoism which characterized Maeterlinck and his friends in Paris. Introspective, melancholy, mastering form, lingering over the sonorousness of words, quivering with almost gruesome nervousness, Von Hofmannsthal wrote poems and dramatic scenes; he also translated from various sources.

But he did more, for he rewrote, after his own manner, whatever appealed to him most in world literature. One finds a curious excrescence which cakes the purity of Sophocles and the mediævalism of "Everyman", after Von Hofmannsthal gets through with them. In the manner of his Viennese associates, he published, in leaflet form, during 1892, some of his opinions of the new spirit pervading art, which "opposed the effete and puerile trend of naturalism having its origin in a false conception of reality."

From a translation, made by Elizabeth Walter, I cull the following philosophical measure of Von Hofmannsthal's reaction:

"We are now," he writes, "within a new romanticism in which the old dissatisfaction with cosmic conditions has been laid aside. Poetry has gained complete mastery over life, and, because of its wealth, its mystery, its countless phases, its reflecting proclivities, glorifies it."

In other words, however emotionally nervous the Von Hofmannsthal group may be or might have been, there was always a fine distinction in their minds between what Maeterlinck called "quotidian" happenings, and the unseen forces which surround us and silently guide us. To report the former is mere journalism; to record the latter is art. So it seemed to them. And to record it, one must seek the most exquisite language. Von Hofmannsthal's German, it is generally agreed, like D'Annunzio's Italian and Rostand's French, is difficult to translate because of the beauty inherent in it.

Percival Pollard, in his "Masks and Minstrels", writes: "Exquisite taste and feeling for beauty mark this writing.

In his words is the intoxication of music and of melancholy — that Viennese melancholy which is also in Schnitzler. Color and forms move him more than does human passion. The past and its allure; strange, rare and precious alien things; these stir him. The Venice of bygone ages; mediæval Florence; the Vienna of semi-Oriental Empire days; all periods rococo and baroque rejoice his lyric moods. His words haunt you, like music; but you find, when the melody is still, that there was, after all, nothing but words, words."

Von Hofmannsthal's literary career began early, — at seventeen, when he published "Yesterday" (1891), signed "Morren." "Death and the Fool" (1893) was signed "Loris." The list of his works shows that he is none too rapid a workman, since he believes in careful polish. His fame has become more generally acknowledged through his association with the composer, Richard Strauss, for whom he did the "Electra" libretto, "Ariadne auf Naxos", and "Rosen-Kavalier."

Madame Von Ende says:

"His association with Richard Strauss has weaned Hofmannsthal from the somewhat effete estheticism and pessimism of his youth."

In stage history his name is linked with that of Max Reinhardt and Gordon Craig. The latter did the design for Brahm, the German manager, who produced Von Hofmannsthal's adaptation of Otway's "Venice Preserved" under the title of "Das gerettete Venedig." The manner in which Reinhardt produced "Everyman" is described and pictured in Huntley Carter's "The Theatre of Max Reinhardt."

WORKS

Yesterday. 1891.

The Death of Titian. 1892. See Kuno Francke's "German Classics", Vol. 17, 511–525, translated by John Heard. See also Four Seas Publishing Company, Boston, 1920.

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The Emperor and the Witch. 1895.

The Mine in Falun. 1897.

The Woman in the Window. 1899.

The Wedding of the Sobeide. 1902. Translated in Francke's "German Classics", Vol. 20, 107.

The Adventurer and the Singer. 1902.

Electra. 1904. One act. Translated by Arthur Symons, Brentano, New York, and presented by Mrs. Patrick Campbell, in New York, 1907–1908.

Gestern. Dramatic study in one act. 1904.

Venice Preserved. 1905. See *Poet Lore*, No. 5, 529–543, Boston, September–October, 1915.

Kleine dramen. 1906. Das Bergwerk zu Falun; Der Kaiser und die Hexe; Das kleine Welttheater.

Œdipus and the Sphinx. 1906.

Œdipus Rex (from Sophocles). 1910.

Christina's Homecoming. 1910.

The Rose-Cavalier. 1910.

Madonna Dianora. One act. Translated by Harriet Betty Boas, Richard G. Badger, Boston, 1916. See also Frank Shay's "Fifty Contemporary One-Act Plays", Stewart & Kidd Company, Cincinnati.

Everyman. 1917. Translated by George Sterling and Richard Ordynski.

Ariadne auf Naxos. From Molière. Music by Strauss. Note association with Gordon Craig.

Idyll. One act. Translated by Charles W. Stork, *Drama*, Vol. 26, Chicago.

DEATH AND THE FOOL

BY HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL

TRANSLATED BY

JOHN HEARD, JR.

Characters

DEATH
CLAUDIO, a nobleman
HIS SERVANT
CLAUDIO'S MOTHER
A YOUNG GIRL, abandoned by Claudio } departed spirits
ONE OF CLAUDIO'S EARLY FRIENDS }

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DEATH AND THE FOOL

CLAUDIO'S HOUSE. TIME — THE TWENTIES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Claudio's study furnished in the Empire style. In the background, right and left, are large windows; in the center a glass door leading out to a balcony, from which some wooden stairs descend to the garden. On the left is a white folding door; on the right a similar one, concealed by a green silk curtain, leads to the bedroom. By the window, on the left, stands a desk with an armchair before it. Along the window-pillars are glass cabinets filled with curios. Against the wall, on the right, stands a darkened shrine, carved in Gothic style; above it hang ancient musical instruments, and a portrait by one of the Italian Masters; it is almost black with age. The color of the wall-paper is light, almost white. Stucco with gilt decorations.

CLAUDIO (*sitting by the window. The evening sun shines in*).

Behold, the distant hills stand clothed with light,
As though enameled by the sunset haze,
And o'er them, hanging, alabaster white,
A crown of clouds with golden tips ablaze.
Thus painted masters, in the days of yore,
The bed of clouds, that their Madonnas bore.
The shades of drifting clouds, a soft, deep blue,
Pass o'er the rocky walls of the abyss,
While shadows of the crags, of darker hue,
Cloak the broad valleys 'neath the precipice,
Changing the prairies' emerald green to gray,
And paler colors of the waning day;
While peak to peak flashes the sunset's fire.
How closely knit to mine own heart's desire

Are they who dwell upon those hillsides gaunt,
Whose meager acres, tilled and reaped by hand,
Give rest from labor, and supply each want!
All wild and wondrous, ranging o'er the land,
The winds of early dawn which barefoot come,
Laden with all the fragrance of the heather,
Arouse them from their sleep; the wild bees hum,
And round about them is God's bright, warm weather.
Their very life is one with Nature's self,
And Nature is the goal they strive to reach.
The weariness of toil brings rest itself,
And thus they live, finding rewards in each.
Down from the vault of Heav'n, the sun's great ball
Rolls headlong, plunging in the distant waves,
And sinks from sight amid the crystal caves;
Behind the trees the twilight shadows fall,
The wind blows hot, as from a fiery wall,
Built high along the shore. There cities stand;
A tall ship is the cradle of their young,
Rocked by some Sea-nymph's wave-encircled hand.
A bold, high-minded race, crafty of tongue,
That sails o'er distant, wonder-teeming seas,
Seas of vast silence, where no keel has been;
High swells the bosom of the angry seas,
Then falls, calmed of its wrath. 'Tis so I've seen
Life's blessings stretched afar, and all Life's grace,
While Life's great yearning stared me in the face.
And then, as I approach what seemed so near,
The world grows empty, and forlornly drear,
My whole existence but a hollow dream;
Old passions, but half-felt, and tears unshed
Hang o'er this house, and o'er these streets, and seem
The ghosts of possibilities long dead,
And stir again that yearning without rest
Which drives me forward on my fruitless quest.
(*Standing by the window*)
The neighbors light their lamps, and round them glow

Their narrow lives, within their narrow walls,
Where joy and sorrow alternating flow,
With each sensation that man's heart enthralls;
Wherefore they deem their souls are closely bound,
And loudly do they mourn some absent friend.
Or, if some one of them receives a wound,
They comfort — word I ne'er could comprehend! —
For some vain phrase to them communicates
All that their sorrow and their grief demands.
They do not batter at sev'n fast-closed gates
Forevermore, with bruised and bleeding hands!
What know I of men's life, or yet of them?
I seemingly have stood there with the rest,
Not feeling, only knowing it at best,
And could not make myself a part of them.
I've never plunged, nor lost myself therein.
When others give and take, I stand apart
With untouched spirit and with empty heart,
And from the lips of those I held most dear
I've never drawn Life's essence sweet and clear;
I've never staggered down the lonely road,
Shattered by sorrow, sobbing as I went.
If through my heart some breath of Nature flowed,
Or through my being some slight tremor sent,
My over-active brain gave it a name,
Nor could my wakeful memory forget;
And swift comparisons by thousands came,
Killing all confidence and joy; nor yet
Did suffering stay behind for me to grasp,
Dismembered though she was, disfigured, torn,
Pale from long thinking, and by study worn.
E'en this against my breast I'd gladly clasp! —
Gladness from sorrow's self I could have drawn;
With its great wings, Grief barely brushed my face;
I quailed beneath the touch, and could not mourn,
For discontent alone took sorrow's place!
(*Starting up*)

My fruitless meditation's checked by night;
Strange are the thoughts of men 'twixt dark and light.
But I am weary, and must go to bed.
(*The servant brings a lamp and goes out again*)
The lamp's pale glimmer brings to light again
My study, filled with relics of the dead, —
Vain splendors, by whose help I thought to gain
That life on which I'd set my yearning mind,
Although the road thereto I could not find!
(*Standing before the Crucifix*)
O Christ, how many, many men have knelt
Before Thine ivory feet, together nailed,
Praying to know those strange, sweet fires that melt
Our hearts deep in our breasts! Yet each has quailed
When lonely chills instead of fire forth came,
And gone his way in anguish, pain, and shame!
(*Before an old painting*)
And thou, who star'st at me, thou, Gioconda,
Painted against a background of deep wonder!
Thy body shines as though a soul were hid
Behind those lips, that smile so bitter-sweet,
Or 'neath thy glowing eye's dream-heavy lid;
Just so much of this life thou teachest me
As by my questions I have taught to thee!
(*Turning aside to a cabinet*)
Ye goblets, to whose silver brim have hung
The lips of many, in joy absolute,
And ye, whose strains from many a heart have wrung
Emotion's deepest pangs! O cup! O lute!
How gladly would I change my lot with you,
And in the past become imprisoned too!
Ye shields of wood and bronze, that years have worn,
Where imagery of strange, confused designs
Of toad and angel, griffin and gay fawn
With quaint old birds, and ropes of fruit combines
To form a mass of soul-perplexing lines!
And yet, ye strange devices, ye have known

The throb of life, with all its changing moods,
As strange as though thrown up by some wild floods!
Then, like a netted fish, Form took you for her own!
Vainly have I pursued you, vainly sought,
By your elusive subtleties too firmly caught;
For when I learned your soul's capricious art,
Piercing its mask, mine eyes, grown dim by thought,
No more could find the world's great doors,
And hidden from me were its life and heart.
I stood encompassed by your fickle bands
Like Harpies, pitiless, whose ruthless claws
Uproot each new-sprung flow'r, that stands
In simple beauty by a stream's cool bed.
So lost was I in art's dim, tortuous maze
That I saw light through eyes that were as dead,
And through dead ears heard what was round me said.
I dragged this curse along my weary ways,
An unsolved riddle, yet not quite unguessed!
With half-felt gladness, and with little strife
I lived my days, most like a book at best, —
A book half-understood, yet half-unknown,
Whose meaning but to living men is shown.
And that which caused me joy or grief in life,
Ne'er seemed to me to be its very self,
But more a vision of a life to be,
The hollow likeness of another self.
And so, while phantoms mocked my baffled feet,
I've floundered through a life of love and woe,
Consuming, but not tasting sour and sweet,
Haunted by dreams that come and never go!
Then I arose and looked Life in the face:
The swiftest-footed do not win the race,
Nor by the bravest is the battle won;
Joy brings not laughter, nor do woes bring tears;
Vain answer at vain question loudly jeers!
Above the sombre threshold, one by one,
Intricate dreams arise, where Joy seems all,

Yea, wind and wave, and fills each passing day!
Rudely deceived I am, yet, Wisdom's thrall,
Consumed by empty pride, I go my way
Of sad renunciation, nor complain.
The people round from questions now refrain,
And think me just an ordinary man!
(*The servant brings in a plate of cherries which he puts on the table, and starts to close the door to the balcony.*)
Leave the door open. What affrights thee so?

SERVANT. Your Grace would scarce believe me if I told.
(*Half to himself, as if in fear*)
They've hid themselves within the summer-house.

CLAUDIO. Who's hidden?

SERVANT. Pardon me, I know not, sir.
A crowd of people — an uncanny lot.

CLAUDIO. Beggars?

SERVANT. I cannot say.

CLAUDIO. Then lock the door
That opens from the garden on the street,
And go to bed, and trouble me no more.

SERVANT. That's what affrights me so; I've locked the door
But —

CLAUDIO. Well?

SERVANT. They're sitting in the garden now!
On yonder bench where the Apollo stands,
Close by the curbing of the well there sits
A couple in the shadow. Another one
Is sitting on the Sphinx; we cannot see
Him; for the hedge of yew stands close between.

CLAUDIO. Are they all men?

SERVANT. Some men, some women too.
Not like poor beggars, but in ancient style,
Such as one sees in etchings, are they clad.
Yet men they cannot be, who sit and stare
At one, as if they stared at empty space
In such a gruesome way, with cold, dead eyes!

No, they 're not men. Yet, be not angry, sir!
For nothing in the world would I go near!
Pray God, that in the morning they 'll be gone!
With your permission, I will bolt the door
And sprinkle holy water on the lock.
I've never seen such men as these before;
And men have no such eyes as these folk have!

CLAUDIO. Do what thou wilt. Good night.

(*For a few moments he walks up and down the room thoughtfully. From behind the scene sound the longing and touching strains of a violin; at first, faint and distant; the music draws nearer and nearer until, at last, it rings deep and full, as if from the next room.*)

Ha, I hear music!
Ay, and it speaks most strangely to my soul!
Has that man's foolishness disturbed my heart?
And yet, methinks, I never heard such tones
Drawn from a violin by mortal art.
In deep and throbbing strains sweet and wistful
It echoes in mine ears with power divine;
It seems like endless hope at Pity's shrine,
And promises relief from all my pains.
Now from the ancient walls, so still and stern,
It flows, and fills my soul with peaceful light,
As did my tender Mother's fond return,
My mistress', or some friend's, long lost from sight
It raises thoughts that cheer me, and bring joy.
This music takes me back to childhood days.
So stood I in the springtime once, a boy
Who thought to find all Life in pleasant ways.
And then the wish to pass all bound'ries came,
And swept my soul with dim, unknown desire;
And days of wandering came, with passion's flame,
That set the whole wide world and sea afire;
The roses blossomed, and the bells chimed bright,
As though rejoicing in this new-sprung light.
A thrill of life passed through each living thing,

As striving to draw near to him who loved!
How stirred was I in soul, how deeply moved
To be a living part of Life's great ring!
Then I approached, whereto my heart did guide
That surging stream of love which feeds us all.
Contentment filled my mind and kept it wide,
Which now not e'en my dream can understand.
Ring on, sweet music, still a little while,
And touch my heart with thy mysterious hand,
For then my world seems brightened with a smile,
And life, entranced, re-lives its earlier years;
Then, flame on flame, the fires of joy glow bright,
And melt the stones of life, and dry my tears.
Old and confusèd Wisdom, hoary white,
Which bows my back beneath his heavy weight,
Loosens his strangling clutch, charmed by the sound
Of childish ignorance, which holds him bound
In its simplicity so deep and great.
From far away, the peal of many bells
A life scarce thought of in our dreams foretells,
A life, where Form in all-importance lives,
Austerely kind in what it takes and gives!
(*The music stops suddenly.*)
The music stops which deeply moved my mind,
Wherein both God and man I seemed to find,
And he who worked this spell in ignorance,
Some beggar-minstrel, holds his cap for pence!
(*Standing by the window on the right.*)
'Tis strange, he is not standing in the street!
Perhaps I'll see him from this window here.
(*As he goes to the door on the right the curtain is silently thrown back and Death stands in the doorway. He holds the violin bow in his hand, while the violin hangs from his belt. He looks quietly at Claudio who steps back in horror.*)
A horror seizes me, a damp, cold fear.
Since thy strange fiddle sounded then so sweet,
Whence comes this awful dread at seeing thee?

My throat is dry, my hair stands all on end.
Away! For thou art Death! What would'st of me?
I fear thee; go away! I cannot scream;
My grasp on light and life fails like a dream!
Go, go! Who called thee, or who let thee in?

DEATH. Arise, and cast this fear inherited
Aside, I 'm not a skeleton of dread;
Of Dionysus' and of Venus' kin
I am; the God of human souls stands here.
Thou'st felt my touch when some warm summer night
Through golden rays, a leaf fell dead and sere,
My breath passed by thee in the waning light,
For 'twas the wind that breathes on all ripe things.
When thy emotions fluttered up to fill
Thy soul, with warm and beating wings,
And when thy heart stopped, with a sudden thrill
At finding this strange monster kith and kin,
When in Life's dance thou stood'st against thy will,
And took'st as thine the world and all therein,
Each time thou'st faced some all-important hour
Which made thy mortal body quake with fear,
I've touched thy inmost self, and standing near,
I've breathed upon thy soul with secret power.

CLAUDIO. Enough, and though unbidden, welcome, friend!
(*After a short pause.*)
But pray, why camest thou, and to what end?

DEATH. My coming means but one same thing to all.

CLAUDIO. And yet my life's thread is not nearly gone,
For mark me well: ere any leaf doth fall
It is decayed, and its life-sap is drawn.
Not so with me; I've never lived my day.

DEATH. Yet like all others thou hast gone thy way.

CLAUDIO. As flowers, growing by a river's flow,
Are by the sombre waters swept away,
My youthful days slipped by; I did not know
That time was called our life's all glorious day.
And then I stood outside life's fast-closed door,

Aghast with wonder, and with yearnings wrung,
Hoping that 'mid the storms' majestic roar
It would burst open, by some power sprung.
It came not so to pass; but once inside
I stood unconsecrate and unaware,
Helpless to breathe my deepest wish in prayer,
Shadowed by fate, from which I could not hide,
My soul distraught, and in the twilight lost,
Afraid, disturbed in my heart's innermost.
Half-heartedly, oppressed in mind and mood,
Strangely imprisoned in the wondrous whole,
True fire I never felt inflame my soul
Nor Life's great waves rush surging through my blood!
That God I never found upon my quest
With whom we must do battle to be blessed.

DEATH. To thee was given as much as to all men:
An earthly life, to live in earthly wise!
For, in the heart of each, a Spirit lies
Who with his breath establishes again
A ruling in this chaos of dead things,
By which each one his garden is to sow,
Wherein his power, his pain and joy must grow.
Woe then if I'm the first this news that brings!
Man binds, and man is bound; wild lonely hours
Bring these discoveries. The tears of sleep,
And utter weariness corrode your powers.
Still willing, but oppressed with yearnings deep,
Though half refused, with aching, long-drawn breath,
And while warm life still throbs within each vein
Ye fall into my arms, for I am Death,
Yet each of you is ripe.

CLAUDIO. Not so with me!
I am not ripe, so let me still remain!
Let me live on; no more will I complain.
Firmly I'll grasp the sod of earth; for see,
A great desire to live cries out aloud,
And Terror's touch has torn the veiling cloud.

At last I feel! O leave me, let me live!
I feel it by this crumbling of all walls.
To earthly things my heart I now can give,
And thou shalt see, no more dumb animals
I 'll think this world of men, no longer dolls!
Their every sentiment shall touch my heart;
In grief and sorrow I will take a part;
With all my being Faith I'll strive to learn,
Since on this life, through Faith, we gain our hold.
So will I live, and so my life I'll mold
That good and evil rule me turn by turn
With equal power to make me laugh and burn.
Then will these lumps of clay take fire and live;
Along Life's road, real living men I'll find;
No more with silent sneer I'll take and give,
But will be bound, and mightily will bind!
(*As he sees the unmoved countenance of Death he speaks with rising agitation.*)
Believe me, 't was not so before; for see,
Think'st thou that I have loved or hated? Nay!
Not e'en the seeds thereof have been in me;
Illusions were they, empty words' vain play!
It's true! I'll prove it! Here these letters, see!
(*He throws open a drawer and takes out packages of old letters.*)
The words and vows of passion, Love's complaint!
But thinkest thou that I could ever know
What she felt; what my answers seemed to paint?
(*He throws the packages at Death's feet. The letters scatter on the floor.*)
There hast thou this love-episode's whole life,
Where I, and only I, swept to and fro
As following the throbs of inner strife,
Now good, now bad, I throbbed with them again,
With every noble impulse scoffed to shame!
There hast thou it! the rest is all the same,
Devoid of meaning, joy, or any pain,

And where true love or hatred never came!

DEATH. Thou fool, thou wicked fool, before thou die
I'll teach thee to revere the life thou leav'st!
Stand silently, and mark with careful eye
That those, whom thou but barren clods believ'st
Were filled with Life's great joy, or bitter sting,
And thou alone wast void of everything!

[*Death plays a few notes on his violin as if to call some one forth. He stands by the bedroom door near the front of the stage on the right. Claudio stands by the wall on the left in the semi-darkness. From the door on the right comes the Mother. She is not very old, and wears a long dress of black silk, with a cap of the same material, and a white ruche which fits closely around her face. In her delicate, pale hands she holds a white lace handkerchief. She comes quietly from the door and walks silently about the room.*

MOTHER. How many sad, sweet sorrows I breathe in
With this room's atmosphere, for half my life
On earth hangs here like lavender's faint breath,
So delicate, yet dead. A mother's life
Was mine; one-third was pain, one-third was care,
Anxiety one-third. Unknown to man
Are these?
(*Standing by the chest.*)
And is the corner's edge still sharp?
He struck it once, and made his temple bleed.
Ay, ay, he was a little child, but wild,
He ran so fast, and was so hard to hold.
And, oh, that window! I have stood there oft
And listened in the night to hear his step,
Aroused from sleep by fond anxiety
When clocks struck two, then three, and it was dawn,
And still he had not come! How oft — But he,
He never knew it! I was much alone
As well by day as night. My hands, indeed,
Could water flowers, dust, and polish brass
Until it shone, throughout the dragging day,

But all the time my mind had naught to do.
A blank wheel in the circle spins around
With undefinèd fears, and secret dreams
Of pains but dimly felt, that are a part
Of that strange and mysterious holiness,
Which is the secret of maternity,
And interweaves itself with Life's great woof!
But I may now no longer breathe this air,
Oppressive, sweet, yet sadly nourishing —
The air of life that 's passed — for I must go,
And go for evermore!

[*She goes out by the middle door.*

CLAUDIO. Ah, Mother, come!

DEATH. Hush, be still!
Thou canst not bring her back.

CLAUDIO. Ah, Mother, come,
And let me, humbly kneeling by thy side,
Express with these my lips, close pressed together,
Yet trembling, trembling in their silent pride —
Let me but speak! Ah, hold her firmly! Call her!
She did not wish to go. Could 'st thou not see?
Why dost thou force her, Horror? Answer me!

DEATH. Leave me what 's mine; it once was thine.

CLAUDIO. O God.
I did not feel it! Withered, barren, sere,
What have I ever felt, that my whole heart
Reached out and yearned to her, when she was near?
As in the presence of divinity
She made me shudder, and there ran through me
Man's longings, man's desires, and all man's fears!

[*Death, unmoved by his complaints, plays an old Volkslied. Slowly a young girl comes in. She wears a simple dress, with large flowers on it, sandals with crossed laces. Around her neck she has a bit of fichu. Her head is uncovered.*

THE YOUNG GIRL. 'T was fair! Dost thou no more remember it?
Oh, thou hast made me suffer cruelly,

But what is there in life ends not in tears?
The happy days I 've seen were very few,
But they were fair, ay, fair as in a dream!
The flowers on the window-sill! My flowers!
The little shaky spinet, and the desk
Wherein I kept thy letters, and the things
Thou gavest me! — Nay, nay, deride me not! —
These trifles were all beautiful to me,
And spoke to me with loving, living lips!
When in the sultry evening it had rained,
And we were standing in the window here
The fragrance of the rain-drenched flowers — !
'T is gone,
And everything that was alive is dead,
Buried within our fond love's little grave!
Ah, 't was so beautiful! Thine is the blame
That it was fair, and thine, too, is the shame
For casting me aside, a thoughtless child
That, wearied of the play, unheeded drops
His flowers. God! I 'd naught to bind thee with!
(*After a short pause.*)
And then, when thy last cruel letter came,
I wished to die! I do not say this now
To cause thee grief. I wished to write to thee
A farewell word, but not to chide thee, dear,
Not full of anger, or of wild distress,
But that thou mightest long for me once more,
And for my love; to make thee shed one tear
Because it was too late. I did not write;
Indeed why should I, for how did I know
How much of thy great heart was in the things
Which filled my little mind with feverish joy,
Until I walked by day as in a dream?
Good-will cannot make faith from faithlessness,
And tears bring not what 's dead to life again!
But people do not die of wounds like these.
'T was not till later, after misery,

And long, gaunt years of pain, that I could die,
And then I begged that when thine hour should come
I might be with thee then, not to reproach,
Nor raise the ghastly past with words; but more
As when one drains a goblet of rare wine
The fragrance calls to mind with fleeting thought
Some old desires, half faded and forgot.

[*She goes off; Claudio hides his face in his hands. As she goes out a man enters. He seems to be of about Claudio's age. He wears a disordered and dusty traveling suit. From the left side of his chest protrudes the wooden handle of a dagger. He stands in the middle of the stage facing Claudio.*

THE MAN. Dost thou still live, thou everlasting mummer?
Still reading Horace! Dost thou still rejoice
At clever cynicisms void of heart?
Thou mad'st approaches to me with fair words,
Saying that I had brought things to thy mind
Which slept within thy soul, as speaks at times
The night-wind of far distant lands. Ah, yes!
A harp's fair music in the wind wast thou,
The amorous wind was some one else's breath
Exhausted quite, now mine, another's now!
Long were we friends! Yes, friends! That is to say,
In common was our talk by day and night;
Our intercourse with other men, nay more,
In common trifled we with one same girl!
But our community was that of lord
And slave, who share in common house, and chair,
Dog, mid-day meal, or whip; to one the house
Is happiness, a prison to the other.
The litter carries one, its carven pole
Bruises the other's shoulder; for the one
The dog does tricks upon the garden walks,
But 't is the other one who feeds the brute!
The half-developed feelings of my soul,
Pearls of great sorrow born, thou took'st from me,
To throw them like cheap playthings in the air!

Swift to make friends or conquest e'er wert thou,
My soul in silent supplication yearned,
Aloof and shy, with close-set teeth, while thou
Boldly didst lay thine hand on everything!
For me the word, shy, hesitating, died
Ere it was born. A woman crossed
Our path. And, lo, it seized me as disease
Strikes down a man, when all our senses reel,
Blinded from staring long at one same goal,
A goal of heavy sweetness, of wild flames,
And drowsy fragrance flashing like fool's-fire
In the black darkness! Oh, thou saw'st it all!
It charmed thee! "Yes, since oft I feel the same,
The girl's sophisticated ways have charmed
My mind! Her blasé air, her bitter pride,
So cynical, and yet so young!" Didst thou
Not so describe her to me afterward?
It charmed thee, but to me 't was more than soul
And body! Wearied of the doll, in time
Thou gavest her to me! But by disgust
For thee how changed in face, how haggard, worn,
Stripped of her former grace and wondrous charm,
Her features lifeless, and that mass of hair
Hanging as dead! — A mask, and nothing more
Thou gavest me; worthless, contemptible,
The work of thy vile art which, acid-like,
Had seared and scarred that strange, sweet being.
For this I hated thee as bitterly
As I instinctively had loathed thy face;
And I avoided thee.
And then my fate,
Which blessed the broken bits of me at last,
Drove me with one fixed purpose in my breast
On to a goal! One impulse still remained
Unblighted by thy poisonous influence,
And for a noble aim my fate drove me
Upon the grim point of a murderer's knife,

And left me, slowly rotting in a ditch
Beside the road; rotting because of things
Thou canst not understand, and yet which are
Thrice blessèd as compared to thee, who art
To others naught, who nothing are to thee!
[*He goes off.*

CLAUDIO. To others naught, who nothing are to me!
(*He raises himself slowly.*)
As on the stage a low comedian
Who has his cue, and speaks his part, and goes
Indifferent to others and untouched
Alike by his own voice and others' cries,
Who are, in turn, not moved at all by him!
Just so upon Life's stage I've played my part,
But badly, without power! — Why was it so?
And why, O Death, dost thou teach me to see
This life, not darkly, through a veiling cloud
But clearly, rousing something in my heart
As it goes by? Why in our childish thoughts
Do we form such ideals of this life
That when, if e'er, it comes to pass, it leaves
Us but the hollow shudder of sad thoughts?
Why doth no music echo in our ears
To raise a magic spirit-world around,
Within whose secret grasp our heart is bound,
Outpoured, to us unknown, as secretly
As flowers beneath the brown earth hidden lie?
Could I but be with thee, there where thou art
But heard, and not forever torn apart
By endless trifles! Oh, I can! Grant thou
All that wherewith thou now hast threatened me!
My life was dead, O Death, be my life now!
What, since I recognize them both, makes me
Call this one Life, and that one Death, since thou
Canst press more of this life in one short hour
Than was contained in my whole life before!
I will forget dim darkness and its lore,

And consecrate myself to thy great power!
(*He pauses for a moment in thought.*)
Maybe that this is but a dying mood
Caused by the watchfulness of dying blood;
Yet in this life I've never understood
As much, and so, O Death, I bless thy power.
If, like a candle, I must die, snuffed out,
My mind still overflowing with this hour,
With me let all this pallid life go out!
I knew not that I lived until I die.
As when one sleeps the power of what he dreams
May waken him, so is it now, and I,
Fulfilled of feeling never felt before,
Awake in Death from Life's compelling dreams!
[*He falls dead at the feet of Death.*

DEATH (*as he moves away, shaking his head*).
How wonderful this mortal seed
Who the invisible can see,
Who Life's unwritten book can read,
Who scattered things can firmly bind,
And paths in the impenetrable darkness find!
[*The room remains silent; outside one can see Death go past, playing the violin. Behind him walk the Mother, the Young Girl, and close beside them a figure which closely resembles that of Claudio.*

CURTAIN

THE BLIND

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

(1862-)

MAETERLINCK'S workshop is full of intangible things. Any one entering with the expectancy of finding worldly material will be baffled. They will not even see the workman, if they look for him in the outward event. Perhaps there is no other modern author who has written so much, and yet who is so persistent in his silence, when it comes to those quotidian happenings by which a man is measured in time and space.

This delicate workshop is full of experiments and discoveries. It is filled with the essence of things rather than with the things themselves. Deep-sea soundings are here taken of man's soul, and chartings are made of his relationship with the infinite. Outside of a very few activities which are associated with the person of Maeterlinck, he will usually be found wandering in the shadowy past or among the mysterious veils of the future. It is these adventures he records in his workshop, and they are sent forth in the shape of fragile plays and speculative essays.

At first, when he was a young man, Maeterlinck's expression took form in exotic poems, after the manner of Baudelaire and Mallarmé. They were misty, heavily laden with mood, shaken with chill, and, in this atmosphere moved sickly figures suffering from malaria of the soul. A whole volume of such poems was issued, entitled "Serres Chaudes."

The chips left lying about the work-bench were of this character. From them Maeterlinck shaped an entire series

of marionette plays; what is more, he formulated an entire theory of drama which repudiated the actor, and reduced all dialogue to mere gaspings of men and women, slaves of destiny and victims of their will-less selves. When he wrote "La Princesse Maleine", he was hailed as the Belgian Shakespeare; when he completed "Pélléas et Mélisande", critics declared he had surpassed Dante's Francesca and Paolo in pathos of love story. But this was fulsome praise. What he had done was, by the use of tangible forces in Nature, to introduce on the stage the same new shudder he had created in his moody poems.

Nevertheless, he developed a dexterity in creating psychological moods which reached supreme illustration in "Les Aveugles" and "L'Intruse." His theory of the marionette theater reached as near success in these as in any of his early attempts. "A time will come, perhaps," so he wrote, "when our souls will know each other without the intermediary of the senses. . . . It is only when life is sluggish within us that we speak."

But a workman at his bench is continually experimenting. Maeterlinck was destined to escape the early fumes which permeated his workshop. Not only that, but his association with Georgette Leblanc resulted in his bringing order out of chaos in his mind. She was his great influence, artistically. She made him use seasoned material, warmed in the sunlight of human passion. Because of her, "Aglavaine et Sélysette" is more firmly wrought in will power, portending "Ardiane" and "Joyzelle." Maeterlinck is on the road to passion and to "Monna Vanna."

Now, through the window of the workshop — meaning the window of Maeterlinck's own soul — beamed a new philosophy — that of happiness. It made him change his dramatic theory: while he still recognized the hidden forces before which his characters had heretofore bowed, in the name of Destiny, he now, in his essays on "Wisdom and Destiny" — and in his reading of plays — recognized that, through wisdom, man learns when to exercise his will in the control

of Destiny. The workman has become alive,—still addicted to speculation on moral issues, still hammering with the tools peculiar to himself alone against the outer casing which enshrouds the mystery of man.

From this point, Maeterlinck has steadily progressed in his spiritual carpentry. He has worked in the Past, the Present, the Future. He has climbed heights in order to swing lines of spiritual communication between the living and the dead. He has progressed out of the dark questioning into the light of calmer, surer questioning. And the chips around his work-bench, while still of spiritual quality, are more seasoned. He has never been tempted away from his special trade. Give him an automobile to ride in, and he will breathe into it the very soul of action; send him to his apiary, and he will fathom a new social order in "La Vie des Abeilles." During the World War, he emerged from his accustomed seclusion to appear at public meetings. Being outside the age of war service, he had worked in the fields, gathering the harvest; he would now sacrifice himself on the platform. But when he talked of Edith Cavell, as in "The Wrack of the Storm", he gave her something higher than individual beauty; and what interested him was the triumph of soul — among the millions of soldiers—that met the strain of events put upon it. Never once has his workshop failed to be filled with spiritual things.

Maurice Maeterlinck (Polydore-Marie-Bernard) was born at Ghent, on August 29, 1862, of a Flemish family. His early years were spent at Oostacker, near a canal connecting Ghent with a small town, Terneuzen, in Dutch Flanders. He attended the Jesuit College of Sainte-Barbe, and, in 1885, began the study of law. In 1886, however, he was in Paris, a devoted follower of the Symbolist movement in French literature. This was his entrance into literature. He is a member of the French Academy, and has been the recipient of the Nobel prize.

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[1] No attempt has been made to record the Maeterlinck performances.

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Maeterlinck also wrote "A Miracle of St. Anthony", translated by De Mattos; and himself translated "Macbeth" and Ford's "'Tis a Pity She's a Whore."

THE BLIND

BY MAURICE MAETERLINCK

TRANSLATED BY

RICHARD HOVEY

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TO CHARLES VAN LERBERGHE

Characters

The Priest
Three Men Who Were Born Blind
A Very Old Blind Man
Fifth Blind Man (who is also deaf)
Sixth Blind Man (who can distinguish light and darkness)
Three Old Blind Women in Prayer
A Very Old Blind Woman
A Young Blind Girl
A Blind Madwoman
An Infant, child of the madwoman
A Dog

THE BLIND

An ancient Norland forest, with an eternal look, under a sky of deep stars.

In the center, and in the deep of the night, a very old priest is sitting, wrapped in a great black cloak. The chest and the head, gently upturned and deathly motionless, rest against the trunk of a giant hollow oak. The face is fearsome pale and of an immovable waxen lividness, in which the purple lips fall slightly apart. The dumb, fixed eyes no longer look out from the visible side of Eternity and seem to bleed with immemorial sorrows and with tears. The hair, of a solemn whiteness, falls in stringy locks, stiff and few, over a face more illuminated and more weary than all that surrounds it in the watchful stillness of that melancholy wood. The hands, pitifully thin, are clasped rigidly over the thighs.

On the right, six old men, all blind, are sitting on stones, stumps and dead leaves.

On the left, separated from them by an uprooted tree and fragments of rock, six women, also blind, are sitting opposite the old men. Three among them pray and mourn without ceasing, in a muffled voice. Another is old in the extreme. The fifth, in an attitude of mute insanity, holds on her knees a little sleeping child. The sixth is strangely young, and her whole body is drenched with her beautiful hair. They, as well as the old men, are all clad in the same ample and somber garments. Most of them are waiting, with their elbows on their knees and their faces in their hands; and all seem to have lost the habit of ineffectual gesture and no longer turn their heads at the stifled and uneasy noises of the Island. Tall funereal trees, — yews, weeping-willows, cypresses, — cover

them with their faithful shadows. A cluster of long, sickly asphodels is in bloom, not far from the priest, in the night. It is unusually oppressive, despite the moonlight that here and there struggles to pierce for an instant the glooms of the foliage.

FIRST BLIND MAN (*who was born blind*). He hasn't come back yet?

SECOND BLIND MAN (*who also was born blind*). You have awakened me.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I was sleeping, too.

THIRD BLIND MAN (*also born blind*). I was sleeping, too.

FIRST BLIND MAN. He hasn't come yet?

SECOND BLIND MAN. I hear nothing coming.

THIRD BLIND MAN. It is time to go back to the Asylum.

FIRST BLIND MAN. We ought to find out where we are.

SECOND BLIND MAN. It has grown cold since he left.

FIRST BLIND MAN. We ought to find out where we are!

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. Does any one know where we are?

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. We were walking a very long while; we must be a long way from the Asylum.

FIRST BLIND MAN. Oh! the women are opposite us?

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. We are sitting opposite you.

FIRST BLIND MAN. Wait, I am coming over where you are. (*He rises and gropes in the dark*) — Where are you? — Speak! let me hear where you are!

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. Here; we are sitting on stones.

FIRST BLIND MAN (*advances and stumbles against the fallen tree and the rocks*). There is something between us.

SECOND BLIND MAN. We had better keep our places.

THIRD BLIND MAN. Where are you sitting? — Will you come over by us?

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. We dare not rise!

THIRD BLIND MAN. Why did he separate us?

FIRST BLIND MAN. I hear praying on the women's side.

SECOND BLIND MAN. Yes; the three old women are praying.

FIRST BLIND MAN. This is no time for prayer!

SECOND BLIND MAN. You will pray soon enough, in the dormitory!

[*The three old women continue their prayers.*

THIRD BLIND MAN. I should like to know who it is I am sitting by.

SECOND BLIND MAN. I think I am next to you.

[*They feel about them.*

THIRD BLIND MAN. We can't reach each other.

FIRST BLIND MAN. Nevertheless, we are not far apart. (*He feels about him and strikes with his staff the fifth blind man, who utters a muffled groan.*) The one who cannot hear is beside us.

SECOND BLIND MAN. I don't hear everybody; we were six just now.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I am going to count. Let us question the women, too; we must know what to depend upon. I hear the three old women praying all the time; are they together?

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. They are sitting beside me, on a rock.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I am sitting on dead leaves.

THIRD BLIND MAN. And the beautiful blind girl, where is she?

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. She is near them that pray.

SECOND BLIND MAN. Where is the mad woman, and her child?

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. He sleeps; do not awaken him!

FIRST BLIND MAN. Oh! how far away you are from us! I thought you were opposite me!

THIRD BLIND MAN. We know — nearly — all we need to know. Let us chat a little, while we wait for the priest to come back.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. He told us to wait for him in silence.

THIRD BLIND MAN. We are not in a church.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. You do not know where we are.

THIRD BLIND MAN. I am afraid when I am not speaking.

SECOND BLIND MAN. Do you know where the priest went?

THIRD BLIND MAN. I think he leaves us for too long a time.

FIRST BLIND MAN. He is getting too old. It looks as though he himself has no longer seen for some time. He will not admit it, for fear another should come to take his place among us; but I suspect he hardly sees at all any more. We must have another guide; he no longer listens to us, and we are getting too numerous. He and the three nuns are the only people in the house who can see; and they are all older than we are! — I am sure he has misled us and that he is looking for the road. Where has he gone? — He has no right to leave us here.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. He has gone a long way: I think he said so to the women.

FIRST BLIND MAN. He no longer speaks except to the women? — Do we no longer exist? — We shall have to complain of him in the end.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. To whom will you complain?

FIRST BLIND MAN. I don't know yet; we shall see, we shall see. — But where has he gone, I say? — I am asking the women.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. He was weary with walking such a long time. I think he sat down a moment among us. He has been very sad and very feeble for several days. He is afraid since the physician died. He is alone. He hardly speaks any more. I don't know what has happened. He insisted on going out to-day. He said he wished to see the Island, a last time, in the sunshine, before winter came. The winter will be very long and cold, it seems, and the ice comes already from the North. He was very uneasy, too: they say the storms of the last few days have swollen the river and all the dikes are shaken. He said also that the sea frightened him; it is troubled without cause, it seems, and the coast

of the Island is no longer high enough. He wished to see; but he did not tell us what he saw. — At present, I think he has gone to get some bread and water for the mad woman. He said he would have to go a long way, perhaps. We must wait.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. He took my hands when he left; and his hands shook as if he were afraid. Then he kissed me.

FIRST BLIND MAN. Oh! oh!

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I asked him what had happened. He told me he did not know what was going to happen. He told me the reign of old men was going to end, perhaps.

FIRST BLIND MAN. What did he mean by saying that?

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I did not understand him. He told me he was going over by the great lighthouse.

FIRST BLIND MAN. Is there a lighthouse here?

THE YOUND BLIND GIRL. Yes, at the north of the Island. I believe we are not far from it. He said he saw the light of the beacon even here, through the leaves. He has never seemed more sorrowful than to-day, and I believe he has been weeping for several days. I do not know why, but I wept also without seeing him. I did not hear him go away. I did not question him any further. I was aware that he smiled very gravely; I was aware that he closed his eyes and wished to be silent.

FIRST BLIND MAN. He said nothing to us of all that!

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. You do not listen when he speaks!

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. You all murmur when he speaks!

SECOND BLIND MAN. He merely said "Good-night" to us when he went away.

THIRD BLIND MAN. It must be very late.

FIRST BLIND MAN. He said "Good-night" two or three times when he went away, as if he were going to sleep. I was aware that he was looking at me when he said "Good-night; good-night." — The voice has a different sound when you look at any one fixedly.

FIFTH BLIND MAN. Pity the blind!

FIRST BLIND MAN. Who is that, talking nonsense?

SECOND BLIND MAN. I think it is he who is deaf.

FIRST BLIND MAN. Be quiet! — This is no time for begging!

THIRD BLIND MAN. Where did he go to get his bread and water?

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. He went toward the sea.

THIRD BLIND MAN. Nobody goes toward the sea like that at his age!

SECOND BLIND MAN. Are we near the sea?

THE OLD BLIND WOMAN. Yes; keep still a moment; you will hear it.

[*Murmur of a sea, near by and very calm, against the cliffs.*

SECOND BLIND MAN. I hear only the three old women praying.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. Listen well; you will hear it across their prayers.

SECOND BLIND MAN. Yes; I hear something not far from us.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. It was asleep; one would say that it awaked.

FIRST BLIND MAN. He was wrong to bring us here; I do not like to hear that noise.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. You know quite well the Island is not large. It can be heard whenever one goes outside the Asylum close.

SECOND BLIND MAN. I never listened to it.

THIRD BLIND MAN. It seems close beside us to-day; I do not like to hear it so near.

SECOND BLIND MAN. No more do I; besides, we didn't ask to go out from the Asylum.

THIRD BLIND MAN. We have never come so far as this; it was needless to bring us so far.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. The weather was very fine this morning; he wanted to have us enjoy the last sunny days, before shutting us up all winter in the Asylum.

FIRST BLIND MAN. But I prefer to stay in the Asylum.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. He said also that we ought to know something of the little Island we live on. He himself had never been all over it; there is a mountain that no one has climbed, valleys one fears to go down into, and caves into which no one has ever yet penetrated. Finally he said we must not always wait for the sun under the vaulted roof of the dormitory; he wished to lead us as far as the seashore. He has gone there alone.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. He is right. We must think of living.

FIRST BLIND MAN. But there is nothing to see outside!

SECOND BLIND MAN. Are we in the sun, now?

THIRD BLIND MAN. Is the sun still shining?

SIXTH BLIND MAN. I think not: it seems very late.

SECOND BLIND MAN. What time is it?

THE OTHERS. I do not know. — Nobody knows.

SECOND BLIND MAN. Is it light still? (*To the sixth blind man*) — Where are you? — How is it, you who can see a little, how is it?

SIXTH BLIND MAN. I think it is very dark; when there is sunlight, I see a blue line under my eyelids. I did see one, a long while ago; but now, I no longer perceive anything.

FIRST BLIND MAN. For my part, I know it is late when I am hungry: and I am hungry.

THIRD BLIND MAN. Look up at the sky; perhaps you will see something there!

[*All lift their heads skyward, with the exception of the three who were born blind, who continue to look upon the ground.*

SIXTH BLIND MAN. I do not know whether we are under the sky.

FIRST BLIND MAN. The voice echoes as if we were in a cavern.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. I think, rather, that it echoes so because it is evening.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. It seems to me that I feel the moonlight on my hands.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. I believe there are stars; I hear them.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. So do I.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I hear no noise.

SECOND BLIND MAN. I hear only the noise of our breathing.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. I believe the women are right.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I never heard the stars.

THE TWO OTHERS WHO WERE BORN BLIND. Nor we, either.

[*A flight of night birds alights suddenly in the foliage.*

SECOND BLIND MAN. Listen! listen! — what is up there above us? — Do you hear?

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. Something has passed between us and the sky!

SIXTH BLIND MAN. There is something stirring over our heads; but we cannot reach there!

FIRST BLIND MAN. I do not recognize that noise. — I should like to go back to the Asylum.

SECOND BLIND MAN. We ought to know where we are!

SIXTH BLIND MAN. I have tried to get up; there is nothing but thorns about me; I dare not stretch out my hands.

THIRD BLIND MAN. We ought to know where we are!

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. We cannot know!

SIXTH BLIND MAN. We must be very far from the house. I no longer understand any of the noises.

THIRD BLIND MAN. For a long time I have smelled the odor of dead leaves —

SIXTH BLIND MAN. Is there any of us who has seen the Island in the past, and can tell us where we are?

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. We were all blind when we came here.

FIRST BLIND MAN. We have never seen.

SECOND BLIND MAN. Let us not alarm ourselves needlessly. He will come back soon; let us wait a little longer. But in the future, we will not go out any more with him.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. We cannot go out alone.

FIRST BLIND MAN. We will not go out at all. I had rather not go out.

SECOND BLIND MAN. We had no desire to go out. Nobody asked him to.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. It was a feast-day in the Island; we always go out on the great holidays.

THIRD BLIND MAN. He tapped me on the shoulder while I was still asleep, saying: "Rise, rise; it is time, the sun is shining!" — Is it? I had not perceived it. I never saw the sun.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. *I* have seen the sun, when I was very young.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. So have I; a very long time ago; when I was a child; but I hardly remember it any longer.

THIRD BLIND MAN. Why does he want us to go out every time the sun shines? Who can tell the difference? I never know whether I take a walk at noon or at midnight.

SIXTH BLIND MAN. I had rather go out at noon; I guess vaguely then at a great white light, and my eyes make great efforts to open.

THIRD BLIND MAN. I prefer to stay in the refectory, near the sea-coal fire; there was a big fire this morning.

SECOND BLIND MAN. He could take us into the sun in the courtyard. There the walls are a shelter; you cannot go out when the gate is shut, — I always shut it. — Why are you touching my left elbow?

FIRST BLIND MAN. I have not touched you. I can't reach you.

SECOND BLIND MAN. I tell you somebody touched my elbow!

FIRST BLIND MAN. It was not any of us.

SECOND BLIND MAN. I should like to go away.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. My God! my God! Tell us where we are!

FIRST BLIND MAN. We cannot wait for eternity.

[*A clock, very far away, strikes twelve slowly.*

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. Oh, how far we are from the Asylum!

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. It is midnight.

SECOND BLIND MAN. It is noon. — Does any one know? — Speak!

SIXTH BLIND MAN. I do not know, but I think we are in the dark.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I don't know any longer where I am; we slept too long —

SECOND BLIND MAN. I am hungry.

THE OTHERS. We are hungry and thirsty.

SECOND BLIND MAN. Have we been here long?

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. It seems as if I had been here centuries!

SIXTH BLIND MAN. I begin to understand where we are.

THIRD BLIND MAN. We ought to go toward the side where it struck midnight.

[*All at once the night birds scream exultingly in the darkness.*

FIRST BLIND MAN. Do you hear? — Do you hear?

SECOND BLIND MAN. We are not alone here!

THIRD BLIND MAN. I suspected something a long while ago: we are overheard. — Has he come back?

FIRST BLIND MAN. I don't know what it is: it is above us.

SECOND BLIND MAN. Did the others hear nothing? — You are always silent!

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. We are listening still.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I hear wings about me!

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. My God! my God! Tell us where we are!

SIXTH BLIND MAN. I begin to understand where we are. . . . The Asylum is on the other side of the great river; we crossed the old bridge. He led us to the north of the Island. We are not far from the river, and perhaps we shall hear it if we listen a moment — We must go as far as the water's edge, if he does not come back — There, night and day, great ships pass, and the sailors will perceive us on the banks. It is possible that we are in the wood that surrounds the lighthouse; but I do not know the way out — Will any one follow me?

FIRST BLIND MAN. Let us remain seated! — Let us wait, let us wait. We do not know in what direction the great river is, and there are marshes all about the Asylum. Let us wait, let us wait — He will return — he must return!

SIXTH BLIND MAN. Does any one know by what route we came here? He explained it to us as he walked.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I paid no attention to him.

SIXTH BLIND MAN. Did any one listen to him?

THIRD BLIND MAN. We must listen to him in the future.

SIXTH BLIND MAN. Were any of us born on the Island?

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. You know very well we came from elsewhere.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. We came from the other side of the sea.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I thought I should die on the voyage.

SECOND BLIND MAN. So did I; we came together.

THIRD BLIND MAN. We are all three from the same parish.

FIRST BLIND MAN. They say you can see it from here, on a clear day, — toward the north. It has no steeple.

THIRD BLIND MAN. We came by accident.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. I come from another direction.

SECOND BLIND MAN. From where?

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. I dare no longer dream of it — I hardly remember any longer when I speak of it — It was too long ago — It was colder there than here.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I come from very far.

FIRST BLIND MAN. Well, from where?

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I could not tell you. How would you have me explain! — It is too far from here; it is beyond the sea. I come from a great country — I could only make you understand by signs: and we no longer see — I have wandered too long — But I have seen the sunlight and the water and the fire, mountains, faces, and strange flowers — There are none such on this Island; it is too gloomy and too cold — I have never recognized their perfume since I saw them last — And I have seen my parents and my sisters — I was too young then to

know where I was — I still played by the seashore — But oh, how I remember having seen! — One day I saw the snow on a mountain-top — I began to distinguish the unhappy —

FIRST BLIND MAN. What do you mean?

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I distinguish them yet at times by their voices — I have memories which are clearer when I do not think upon them.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I have no memories.

[*A flight of large migratory birds pass clamorously, above the trees.*

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. Something is passing again across the sky!

SECOND BLIND MAN. Why did you come here?

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. Of whom do you ask that?

SECOND BLIND MAN. Of our young sister.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I was told he could cure me. He told me I would see some day; then I could leave the Island.

FIRST BLIND MAN. We all want to leave the Island!

SECOND BLIND MAN. We shall stay here always.

THIRD BLIND MAN. He is too old; he will not have time to cure us.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. My lids are shut, but I feel that my eyes are alive.

FIRST BLIND MAN. Mine are open.

SECOND BLIND MAN. I sleep with my eyes open.

THIRD BLIND MAN. Let us not talk of our eyes!

SECOND BLIND MAN. It is not long since you came, is it?

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. One evening at prayers I heard a voice on the women's side that I did not recognize; and I knew by your voice that you were very young — I would have liked to see you, to hear you.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I didn't perceive anything.

SECOND BLIND MAN. He gave us no warning.

SIXTH BLIND MAN. They say you are beautiful as a woman who comes from very far.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I have never seen myself.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. We have never seen each other. We ask and we reply; we live together, we are always together, but we know not what we are! — In vain we touch each other with both hands; the eyes learn more than the hands.

SIXTH BLIND MAN. I see your shadows sometimes, when you are in the sun.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. We have never seen the house in which we live; in vain we feel the walls and the windows; we do not know where we live!

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. They say it is an old château, very gloomy and very wretched, where no light is ever seen except in the tower where the priest has his room.

FIRST BLIND MAN. There is no need of light for those who do not see.

SIXTH BLIND MAN. When I tend the flock, in the neighborhood of the Asylum, the sheep return of themselves when they see at nightfall that light in the tower — They have never misled me.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. Years and years we have been together, and we have never seen each other! You would say we were forever alone! — To love, one must see.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. I dream sometimes that I see.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. I see only in my dreams.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I do not dream, usually, except at midnight.

SECOND BLIND MAN. Of what can one dream where the hands are motionless?

[*A flurry of wind shakes the forest, and the leaves fall, thick and gloomily.*

FIFTH BLIND MAN. Who touched my hands?

FIRST BLIND MAN. Something is falling about us!

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. That comes from above; I don't know what it is.

FIFTH BLIND MAN. Who touched my hands? — I was asleep; let me sleep!

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. Nobody touched your hands.

FIFTH BLIND MAN. Who took my hands? Answer loudly; I am a little hard of hearing —

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. We do not know ourselves.

FIFTH BLIND MAN. Has some one come to give us warning?

FIRST BLIND MAN. It is useless to reply; he hears nothing.

THIRD BLIND MAN. It must be admitted, the deaf are very unfortunate.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. I am weary of staying seated.

SIXTH BLIND MAN. I am weary of staying here.

SECOND BLIND MAN. It seems to me we are so far from one another — Let us try to get a little nearer together, — it is beginning to get cold.

THIRD BLIND MAN. I dare not rise! We had better stay where we are.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. We do not know what there may be among us.

SIXTH BLIND MAN. I think both my hands are in blood; I would like to stand up.

THIRD BLIND MAN. You are leaning toward me, — I hear you.

[*The blind madwoman rubs her eyes violently, groaning and turning obstinately toward the motionless priest.*

FIRST BLIND MAN. I hear still another noise.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. I think it is our unfortunate sister rubbing her eyes.

SECOND BLIND MAN. She is never doing anything else; I hear her every night.

THIRD BLIND MAN. She is mad; she never speaks.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. She has never spoken since she had her child — She seems always to be afraid.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. You are not afraid here, then?

FIRST BLIND MAN. Who?

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. All the rest of us.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. Yes, yes; we are afraid.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. We have been afraid for a long time.

FIRST BLIND MAN. Why did you ask that?

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. I do not know why I asked it—There is something here I do not understand—It seems to me I hear weeping all at once among us.

FIRST BLIND MAN. There is no need to fear; I think it is the madwoman.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. There is something else beside—I am sure there is something else beside—It is not that alone that makes me afraid.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. She always weeps when she is going to give suck to her child.

FIRST BLIND MAN. She is the only one that weeps so.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. They say she sees still at times.

FIRST BLIND MAN. You do not hear the others weep.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. To weep, one must see.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I smell an odor of flowers about us.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I smell only the smell of the earth.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. There are flowers,—there are flowers about us.

SECOND BLIND MAN. I smell only the smell of the earth.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. I caught the perfume of flowers in the wind.

THIRD BLIND MAN. I smell only the smell of the earth.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. I believe the women are right.

SIXTH BLIND MAN. Where are they?—I will go pluck them.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. At your right. Rise!

[*The sixth blind man rises slowly and advances groping, and stumbling against the bushes and trees, toward the asphodels, which he breaks and crushes on his way.*

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I hear you breaking the green stalks. Stop! stop!

FIRST BLIND MAN. Don't worry yourselves about flowers, but think of getting home.

SIXTH BLIND MAN. I no longer dare return on my steps.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. You need not return. — Wait. — (*She rises*) Oh, how cold the earth is! It is going to freeze. — (*She advances without hesitation toward the strange, pale asphodels; but she is stopped, in the neighborhood of the flowers, by the uprooted tree and the fragments of rock*) They are here. — I cannot reach them; they are on your side.

SIXTH BLIND MAN. I believe I am plucking them.

[*He plucks the scattered flowers, gropingly, and offers them to her; the night birds fly away.*

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. It seems to me I saw these flowers in the old days — I no longer know their name — Alas, how sickly they are, and how soft the stems are! I hardly recognize them — I think it is the flower of the dead.

[*She twines the asphodels in her hair.*

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. I hear the noise of your hair.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. It is the flowers.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. We shall not see you.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I shall not see myself, any more — I am cold.

[*At this moment the wind rises in the forest, and the sea roars suddenly and with violence against cliffs very near.*

FIRST BLIND MAN. It thunders!

SECOND BLIND MAN. I think there is a storm rising.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. I think it is the sea.

THIRD BLIND MAN. The sea? — Is it the sea? — But it is hardly two steps from us! — It is at our feet! I hear it all about me! — It must be something else!

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I hear the noise of breakers at my feet.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I think it is the wind in the dead leaves.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. I think the women are right.

THIRD BLIND MAN. It will come here!

FIRST BLIND MAN. What direction does the wind come from?

SECOND BLIND MAN. It comes from the sea.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. It always comes from the sea. The sea surrounds us on all sides. It cannot come from anywhere else.

FIRST BLIND MAN. Let us not keep on thinking of the sea!

SECOND BLIND MAN. We must think of it. It will reach us soon.

FIRST BLIND MAN. You do not know if it be the sea.

SECOND BLIND MAN. I hear its surges as if I could dip both hands in them. We cannot stay here! It is perhaps all about us.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. Where would you go?

SECOND BLIND MAN. No matter where! no matter where! I will not hear this noise of waters any longer! Let us go! Let us go!

THIRD BLIND MAN. I think I hear something else. — Listen!

[*A sound of footfalls is heard, hurried and far away, in the dead leaves.*

FIRST BLIND MAN. There is something coming this way.

SECOND BLIND MAN. He is coming! He is coming! He is coming back!

THIRD BLIND MAN. He is coming with little quick steps, like a little child.

SECOND BLIND MAN. Let us make no complaints to him to-day.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. I believe that is not the step of a man!

[*A great dog enters in the forest, and passes in front of the blind folk. — Silence.*

FIRST BLIND MAN. Who's there? — Who are you? — Have pity on us, we have been waiting so long! — (*The dog stops, and coming to the blind man, puts his fore paws on his knees*) Oh, oh, what have you put on my knees? What is it? — Is it an animal? — I believe it is a dog. — Oh, oh, it is the dog, it is the Asylum dog! Come here, sir, come here! He comes to save us! Come here! come here, sir!

THE OTHERS. Come here, sir! come here!

FIRST BLIND MAN. He has come to save us! He has followed our tracks all the way! He is licking my hands as if he had just found me after centuries! He howls for joy! He is going to die for joy! Listen, listen!

THE OTHERS. Come here! come here!

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. Perhaps he is running ahead of somebody.

FIRST BLIND MAN. No, no, he is alone. — I hear nothing coming. — We need no other guide; there is none better. He will lead us wherever we want to go; he will obey us.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. I dare not follow him.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. Nor I.

FIRST BLIND MAN. Why not? His sight is better than ours.

SECOND BLIND MAN. Don't listen to the women!

THIRD BLIND MAN. I believe there is a change in the sky. I breathe freely. The air is pure now.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. It is the sea wind passing about us.

SIXTH BLIND MAN. It seems to me it is getting lighter; I believe the sun is rising.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. I believe it is getting colder.

FIRST BLIND MAN. We are going to find our way again. He is dragging me! — he is dragging me. He is drunk with joy! — I can no longer hold him back! — Follow me, follow me. We are going back to the house!

[*He rises, dragged by the dog, who leads him to the motionless priest, and stops.*

THE OTHERS. Where are you? Where are you? — Where are you going? — Take care!

FIRST BLIND MAN. Wait, wait! Do not follow me yet; I will come back — He is stopping. — What is the matter with him? — Oh, oh, I touched something very cold!

SECOND BLIND MAN. What are you saying? — We can hardly hear your voice any longer.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I have touched — I believe I am touching a face!

THIRD BLIND MAN. What are you saying? — We hardly understand you any longer. What is the matter with you? — Where are you? — Are you already so far away?

FIRST BLIND MAN. Oh, oh, oh! — I do not know yet what it is. — There is a dead man in the midst of us.

THE OTHERS. A dead man in the midst of us? — Where are you? Where are you?

FIRST BLIND MAN. There is a dead man among us, I tell you! Oh, oh, I touched a dead man's face! — You are sitting beside a dead man! One of us must have died suddenly. Why don't you speak, so that I may know who are still alive? Where are you? — Answer! answer, all of you!

[*The blind folk reply in turn, with the exception of the madwoman and the deaf man. The three old women have ceased their prayers.*

FIRST BLIND MAN. I no longer distinguish your voices — You all speak alike! — Your voices are all trembling.

THIRD BLIND MAN. There are two that have not answered — Where are they?

[*He touches with his stick the fifth blind man.*

FIFTH BLIND MAN. Oh! oh! I was asleep; let me sleep!

SIXTH BLIND MAN. It is not he. — Is it the madwoman?

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. She is sitting beside me; I can hear that she is alive.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I believe — I believe it is the priest! — He is standing up! Come, come, come!

SECOND BLIND MAN. He is standing up?

THIRD BLIND MAN. Then he is not dead!

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. Where is he?

SIXTH BLIND MAN. Let us go see!

[*They all rise, with the exception of the madwoman and the fifth blind man, and advance, groping, toward the dead.*

SECOND BLIND MAN. Is he here? — Is it he?

THIRD BLIND MAN. Yes, yes, I recognize him.

FIRST BLIND MAN. My God! my God! what will become of us?

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. Father! father! — Is it you? Father, what has happened? — What is the matter? — Answer us! — We are all about you. Oh! oh! oh!

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. Bring some water; perhaps he still lives.

SECOND BLIND MAN. Let us try — He might perhaps be able to take us back to the Asylum —

THIRD BLIND MAN. It is useless; I no longer hear his heart. — He is cold.

FIRST BLIND MAN. He died without speaking a word.

THIRD BLIND MAN. He ought to have forewarned us.

SECOND BLIND MAN. Oh! how old he was! — This is the first time I ever touched his face.

THIRD BLIND MAN (*feeling the corpse*). He is taller than we.

SECOND BLIND MAN. His eyes are wide open. He died with his hands clasped.

FIRST BLIND MAN. It was unreasonable to die so.

SECOND BLIND MAN. He is not standing up, he is sitting on a stone.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. My God! my God! I did not dream of such a thing! — such a thing! — He has been sick such a long time — He must have suffered to-day — Oh, oh, oh! — He never complained; he only pressed our hands — One does not always understand — One never understands! — Let us go pray about him; go down on your knees.

[*The women kneel, moaning.*

FIRST BLIND MAN. I dare not go down on my knees.

SECOND BLIND MAN. You cannot tell what you might kneel on here.

THIRD BLIND MAN. Was he ill? — He did not tell us.

SECOND BLIND MAN. I heard him muttering in a low voice as he went away. I think he was speaking to our young sister. What did he say?

FIRST BLIND MAN. She will not answer.

SECOND BLIND MAN. Will you no longer answer us? — Where are you, I say? — Speak.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. You made him suffer too much; you have made him die. — You would not go on; you would sit down on the stones of the road to eat; you have grumbled all day — I heard him sigh — He lost heart.

FIRST BLIND MAN. Was he ill? Did you know it?

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. We knew nothing — We never saw him. — When did we ever know anything behind our poor dead eyes? — He never complained. Now it is too late. — I have seen three die — but never in this way! — Now it is our turn.

FIRST BLIND MAN. It was not I that made him suffer. — I said nothing.

SECOND BLIND MAN. No more did I. We followed him without saying anything.

THIRD BLIND MAN. He died, going after water for the madwoman.

FIRST BLIND MAN. What are we going to do now? Where shall we go?

THIRD BLIND MAN. Where is the dog?

FIRST BLIND MAN. Here; he will not go away from the dead man.

THIRD BLIND MAN. Drag him away! take him off, take him off!

FIRST BLIND MAN. He will not leave the dead man.

SECOND BLIND MAN. We cannot wait beside a dead man. We cannot die here in the dark.

THIRD BLIND MAN. Let us remain together; let us not scatter; let us hold one another by the hand; let us all sit on this stone — Where are the others? — Come here, come, come!

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. Where are you?

THIRD BLIND MAN. Here; I am here. Are we all together? — Come nearer me. — Where are your hands? — It is very cold.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. Oh, how cold your hands are!

THIRD BLIND MAN. What are you doing?

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I was putting my hands on my eyes; I thought I was going to see all at once.

FIRST BLIND MAN. Who is weeping so?

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. It is the madwoman sobbing.

FIRST BLIND MAN. And yet she does not know the truth.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. I think we are going to die here.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. Perhaps some one will come.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. Who else would come?

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. I do not know.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I think the nuns will come out from the Asylum.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. They do not go out after dark.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. They never go out.

SECOND BLIND MAN. I think the men at the great lighthouse will perceive us.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. They never come down from their tower.

THIRD BLIND MAN. They will see us, perhaps.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. They look always out to sea.

THIRD BLIND MAN. It is cold.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. Listen to the dead leaves. I believe it is freezing.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. Oh! how hard the earth is!

THIRD BLIND MAN. I hear on my left a sound I do not understand.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. It is the sea moaning against the rocks.

THIRD BLIND MAN. I thought it was the women.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. I hear the ice breaking under the surf.

FIRST BLIND MAN. Who is shivering so? It shakes everybody on the stone.

SECOND BLIND MAN. I can no longer open my hands.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. I hear again a sound I do not understand.

FIRST BLIND MAN. Who is shivering so among us? It shakes the stone.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. I think it is a woman.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. I think the madwoman is shivering the hardest.

THIRD BLIND MAN. We do not hear her child.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. I think he is still nursing.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. He is the only one who can see where we are!

FIRST BLIND MAN. I hear the north wind.

SIXTH BLIND MAN. I think there are no more stars; it is going to snow.

SECOND BLIND MAN. Then we are lost!

THIRD BLIND MAN. If any one sleeps, he must be aroused.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. Nevertheless, I am sleepy.

[*A sudden gust sweeps the dead leaves around in a whirlwind.*

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. Do you hear the dead leaves? — I believe some one is coming toward us.

SECOND BLIND MAN. It is the wind; listen!

THIRD BLIND MAN. No one will ever come.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. The great cold will come.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I hear walking far off.

FIRST BLIND MAN. I hear only the dead leaves.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I hear walking far away from us.

SECOND BLIND MAN. I hear only the north wind.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I tell you, some one is coming toward us.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. I hear a sound of very slow footsteps.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. I believe the women are right.

[*It begins to snow in great flakes.*

FIRST BLIND MAN. Oh, oh! what is it falling so cold upon my hands?

SIXTH BLIND MAN. It is snowing.

FIRST BLIND MAN. Let us press close to one another.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. No, but listen! The sound of footsteps!

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. For God's sake, keep still an instant.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. They come nearer! they come nearer! listen!

[*Here the child of the blind madwoman begins suddenly to wail in the darkness.*

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. The child is crying.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. He sees! he sees! He must see something if he cries. (*She seizes the child in her arms and advances in the direction from which the sound of footsteps seems to come. The other women follow her anxiously and surround her*) I am going to meet him.

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. Take care.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. Oh, how he cries! — What is the matter with him? — Don't cry. — Don't be afraid; there is nothing to frighten you, we are here; we are all about you. — What do you see? — Don't be afraid at all. — Don't cry so! — What do you see? — Tell me, what do you see?

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. The sound of footsteps draws nearer and nearer: listen, listen!

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. I hear the rustling of a gown against the dead leaves.

SIXTH BLIND MAN. Is it a woman?

THE VERY OLD BLIND MAN. Is it a noise of footsteps?

FIRST BLIND MAN. Can it be perhaps the sea in the dead leaves?

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. No, no! They are footsteps, they are footsteps, they are footsteps!

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. We shall know soon. Listen to the dead leaves.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. I hear them, I hear them almost

beside us; listen, listen! — What do you see? What do you see?

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. Which way is he looking?

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. He keeps following the sound of the steps. — Look, look! When I turn him away, he turns back to see — He sees, he sees, he sees! — He must see something strange!

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN (*stepping forward*). Lift him above us, so that he may see better.

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. Stand back, stand back. (*She raises the child above the group of blind folk*) — The footsteps have stopped amongst us.

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. They are here! They are in the midst of us!

THE YOUNG BLIND GIRL. Who are you?

[*Silence.*

THE VERY OLD BLIND WOMAN. Have pity on us!

[*Silence. — The child weeps more desperately.*

CURTAIN

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

HJALMAR BERGSTRÖM
(1868–1914)

Mr. Edwin Björkman first drew my attention to the very graphic little sketch, "The Birthday Party", which it is my privilege to reproduce in this collection. "The original," he writes me, "is named 'Ladies' Tea' — literally — and is laid in Paris. All the characters are Danish women, and their conversation is full of reference to local conditions that would be meaningless to an American audience. For this reason, I had to turn the characters into Americans, and to change their various allusions accordingly. This change, in its turn, necessitated a few small additions to keep the thread of the author's reasoning clear and unbroken. The spirit and general construction of the play remain unchanged."

Writing to Mr. Björkman, Bergström once said, "Having never worked in accordance with any programme, I have not been led into preparing any formulas as to what poetry is or should be. In regard to this question I can only say what personal experience has taught me. Now and then men are born, to whom imaginative writing constitutes the only possible mode of reaction to the impressions, pleasant and unpleasant, which they receive from the outside world. And at times it is also granted such men to set free something within their fellow men — and this is their true reward. To me one of the main characteristics of all good art lies in its striving to make truth seem probable, and on its success at doing so its beauty is founded."

Thanks to the indomitable enthusiasm of a true translator, Mr. Björkman has made available for English readers "Karen

Borneman" (1907) and "Lynggaard & Co." (1905), his most widely accepted plays; the censor of Denmark discounted the former, and the censor of Russia the latter.

Born in 1868, Bergström is what Americans delight in calling a self-made man. His father was a skilled mechanic in Copenhagen, and a Swede by birth; his mother was the daughter of a Danish artisan. In poor circumstances, his natural quickness made him an omnivorous reader and an excellent student when he went through school, helped to higher education through the interest and concern of his teachers. At twenty, he was in the University, working his way by tutoring, and deeply engrossed in the study of experimental psychology. In 1893, he had won his degree of Ph.D. For twelve years following, he was a teacher in the Copenhagen High School.

Bergström's literary career began with novel and short-story writing, in 1894, but it was not until 1902, the date of his first play, "Ida's Wedding", never produced, that his career as a playwright began. Then followed the dramas noted in the chronological list.

Like Ibsen, Bergström was interested both in class and character struggle, and, like Ibsen, he suffered from people judging him almost solely from the angle of the problem, rather than from that of truth which lies at the basis of character. I can find little, outside Mr. Björkman's introduction to his volume of Bergström translations, to put before English readers, of a biographical or thoroughly critical nature. Bergström's one historical drama, "The Golden Fleece" (1908), deals with the Danish sculptor, Thorwaldsen.

WORKS [1]

Ida's Wedding. 1902.

Mint Street 39. 1904.

Lynggaard & Co. 1905. Translated by Edwin Björkman. Little, Brown, and Company, Boston.

[1] This does not represent the entire list of plays. There is an introduction to the published volume of plays in English.

Karen Borneman. 1907. Translated by Edwin Björkman. Little, Brown, and Company, Boston.

The Golden Fleece. 1908.

The Birthday Party. 1910. Translated by Edwin Björkman.

In the Swim. 1910.

The Way to God. 1912.

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

BY HJALMAR BERGSTRÖM

ADAPTED FOR THE AMERICAN STAGE BY

EDWIN BJÖRKMAN

Characters

Miss Jessica Brown, "who paints"
Miss Bang, "who sings"
Miss Annie Newman } sisters, trained to nurse the idle
Miss Mollie Newman } rich
Miss Henrietta Gadding, "from the Embassy"
Miss Helen Frick, who not only paints but lives by it
Miss Van Kirk, also a trained nurse, but formerly "on the stage"
Joseph
A Maid

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Permission to perform this play, either by amateurs or professionals, must be obtained from Mr. Edwin Björkman, care of Little, Brown, and Company, Boston, Mass.

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

As the curtain rises, Miss Brown is seen standing in the center of the room watching Joseph, who is on his knees before the fireplace, trying to get a fire started. Then a maid enters, carrying a tray with a bottle of Chartreuse and some glasses.

MISS BROWN (*pointing to the little round table*). Ici, s'il vous plaît. (*The maid puts the tray on the table and disappears, whereupon Miss Brown turns her attention to Joseph again*) Est-ce qu'il brûle maintenant, Joseph?

JOSEPH. Comment, Madame?

MISS BROWN (*essaying another form of construction*). Est-ce —qu'il—Est-ce qu'il fera chaud?

JOSEPH. Chaud? Oui, Madame—dans cinq minutes. [*He goes out.*

[*Miss Brown gives a final touch to the tea things on the table. When she hears the bell ring in the hallway, she hastens to close the doors to the balcony which have been left open to let out the smoke from the fireplace. Then she goes to the entrance door and opens it.*

BROWN. So glad to see you, Miss Bang.

BANG (*coming into the room*). How are you, my dear Miss Brown? It was so nice of you to ask me!

BROWN. Let me help you with your things. We 'll hang them right here.

BANG. Thank you. (*Placing her coat on the rack in the corner*) And they call this Spring!

BROWN. Yes—nothing but rain.

BANG. It was the hardest thing to get hold of a cab.

BROWN. I suppose so.

BANG (*clearing her throat*). And to have to breathe this dreadful raw air!

BROWN. Yes, yes — it gives me a bad conscience to think that I have dragged you all the way from Auteuil. — Really, for the sake of your voice, you ought not to have come.

BANG. Oh, you can't stay at home fourteen days on a stretch merely because you happen to be a singer — and, of course, I have to go out to visit my *Maestro.*

BROWN. You are still satisfied with him?

BANG. He is magnificent!

BROWN. Won't we have a chance of hearing you in public soon?

BANG (*evasively*). That's quite out of the question for a while yet. (*Begins to look around in a manner showing that she has never been in the room before*) What a nice place!

BROWN. Yes, it is n't bad.

BANG (*at the balcony doors*). How funny! If that is n't the towers of Saint Sulpice!

BROWN. You did n't expect that down in the street.

BANG (*looking around again*). Artists always know how to make themselves comfortable. [*Turning to the picture on the easel.*

BROWN. No, you must n't look at that.

BANG. Why not?

BROWN. Oh, well — the conditions were so unfavorable.

BANG (*just to say something*). The perspective is excellent, I think. (*Looking at one of the sketches over the table on the right*) That's very — cunning.

BROWN. Barely started, you know.

BANG. Have you nothing finished on hand?

BROWN. No, hardly anything but studies and sketches —

BANG. Will you have anything at the *Salon* this year?

BROWN (*with the same evasiveness shown by Miss Bang a little while before*). Not this time, I fear.

BANG (*catching sight of the preparations on the big table*). Is it going to be a real party?

BROWN. Only a few friends.

BANG. And what a lot of beautiful flowers!

BROWN (*who has kept an ear toward the hallway*). That's the Misses Newman, I am sure. Pardon me — (*She hurries to open the door while Miss Bang studies the sheet music on top of the piano*) Hello, girls — it's perfectly fine of you to venture out in weather like this.

MOLLIE. The street-car was at its best, of course.

ANNIE. We had to stand up all the way.

BROWN. And then walk the rest of it, I suppose — you nice old things!

ANNIE. Not a 'bus in sight, of course.

MOLLIE. Happy birthday, Jessica!

ANNIE. And many more of them, Jessica!

[*Hands her a bunch of flowers.*

BROWN. Thanks, thanks! Oh, my, but they are wonderful! Thanks ever so much.

MOLLIE (*starting to hang up her things on the rack*). They are from both of us, of course.

BROWN. You are a couple of dears!

[*Starts to put the flowers on the piano.*

ANNIE (*in the act of hanging up her coat*). Better see where they came from —

BROWN (*discovering the florist's name on the wrappings*). Are you crazy, girls! — Really, I don't know what to say to you. [*She puts the flowers on the top of the piano.*

BANG (*still devoting herself to the music on the piano*). Are you having a birthday, Miss Brown?

BROWN. Yes — unfortunately, I might almost say.

BANG. I had no idea, of course — and so all I can offer is a wish for many happy returns.

BROWN. Many thanks! But I have forgotten to introduce — These are two old friends of mine — we used to play together as children — Miss Mollie Newman, Miss Annie Newman — trained nurses now, and terribly in demand — Miss Bang, the concert singer.

MOLLIE. We have heard of you — they tell us you have a remarkable voice.

BANG. Oh, that's going too far.

ANNIE. I think I heard something about your giving a recital soon.

BANG. N-no — not just yet.

BROWN. Won't you please take off your hats? This is not a call merely.

ANNIE. Can we put them on the bed in there?

BROWN. Yes, indeed.

[*All the visitors take off their hats and put them on the bed inside the alcove.*

BROWN. Tell me — do you find it cold in here?

BANG. No, it's just right.

BROWN. I had to have a real fire to-day. The oil stove is all right for heat, but it does n't exactly — give the right kind of atmosphere. Come and sit down by the fire now — here, Miss Bang.

BANG. Thank you.

[*They seat themselves in front of the fireplace.*

BROWN. Have you made up your minds where to spend the summer?

ANNIE. Looks like Ostend.

MOLLIE. We're in luck, Jessica. Our two "fatties", as we call them — (*to Miss Bang*) that's the cases my sister and I have on hand — both of them are going to Ostend and want us to go with them.

BROWN. That *is* luck.

BANG. The air is splendid, they tell me.

ANNIE. I can't say I fancy Ostend.

MOLLIE. Annie has some rather painful recollections from that place.

BANG. Indeed?

ANNIE. I spent a summer there looking after an idiot who had water on his brain.

BANG. Horrible!

MOLLIE. Worse than that — in spite of all the water on his brain, this idiot went and fell in love with Annie so that it became impossible for her to stay.

BANG. Well, if I ever.

ANNIE. I should prefer to go home this Summer. But Mollie is throwing fits about Ostend — high society is her weakness, you know.

MOLLIE. Listen to her. No, my girl, if any one of us suffers from snobbishness, that's you, and not me.

ANNIE. As you please, but — you *are* rather fond of swell people, and particularly of swell gentlemen.

MOLLIE. Lord, girl — as if I had n't got beyond *that!*

ANNIE. Where are you bound for, Jessica?

BROWN. Brittany is tempting me sorely.

ANNIE. Again?

BROWN. If I only could get some one to go along.

MOLLIE. Is n't Miss Frick going to Brittany?

ANNIE. Why, that fits in splendidly.

BROWN. Look here, girls — please don't start talking of this when she gets here.

ANNIE. Don't you want her?

BROWN. You know how fond of her I am, but — (*turning to Miss Bang*) You are not acquainted with Miss Frick?

BANG. No.

BROWN. She is coming here — we studied together in the same art school, at home.

ANNIE. I hope you don't get scared when you see her.

BANG. Is she as ugly as that?

BROWN. She is a fine woman, and here in Paris it does n't matter that she wears her hair short and uses stiff shirts and smokes enormous cigars — and behaves in general like a man. But in a little fishing village in Brittany — I have been with her once, and it won't happen again. I — I simply can't repeat what they said of us.

MOLLIE. I would n't mind that kind of thing a bit.

BROWN. You just try it, and see if you don't mind! (*Rising*) I guess it's time to start the tea-kettle — the rest must be coming soon, I am sure.

[*She lights the alcohol lamp, opens the tea-caddy and so on.*

BANG. Have you thought of Ophelia Jones? I know she is looking for company.

BROWN (*busy with the tea things*). No, thanks.

BANG. But she is *so* nice.

BROWN. I haven't the least desire to act as foil for our sweet Ophelia. Her tricks are too well known. Every summer she picks out the ugliest girl in the American colony for her traveling companion.

ANNIE. But how can you say that, Jessica — I myself spent the Summer with her a couple of years ago!

BROWN (*after an ominous pause*). That — that must have been for lack of something better. And you yourself told me she was quite unbearable.

BANG. In what way?

BROWN. Oh, she can't put eyes on a male creature without losing her head.

ANNIE. Yes, that's perfectly true.

MOLLIE. I don't see *why* anybody should care.

BANG. Yes, of course, she is a little — behind the time.

BROWN. It's more than a self-respecting woman can stand.

ANNIE. Are *you* going anywhere this Summer?

[*To Miss Bang.*

BANG. It depends on my *Maestro.* I'll stay in Paris as long as he does, and if he should decide to continue his lessons after he goes to the country, I'll go with him.

BROWN. Do you think Henrietta Gadding will come? I understand her noble Countess is still ailing.

MOLLIE. I don't know — I haven't seen her for ever so long.

BANG. Who's Miss Gadding?

ANNIE. Have you never been to a reception at the Embassy? No, that's right — they ceased before you came here. Miss Gadding is there as some sort of companion or governess.

BROWN. Don't you call her governess when she hears it, or you'll have your head taken off.

ANNIE. Well, what is she?

BROWN. A *friend of the family,* dear!

BANG. Isn't the Ambassador married to a French lady?

ANNIE. Yes, this time. It's his second venture, you know, and she is a real Countess — also a dreadfully hysterical creature, between you and me and the lamp-post. The Ambassador himself is most amiable.

BROWN (*her attention still fixed on the door*). Here comes Miss Gadding. (*She goes to meet her, while the others rise and stir about a little*) Ah, there you are, Miss Gadding. So kind of you to come. And many thanks for the charming card you sent me.

GADDING. I don't like to desert old friends.

ANNIE. How's the Embassy, Miss Gadding, and how's yourself?

GADDING. Thank you — the Countess isn't worse at least.

MOLLIE. We were afraid you might not be able to get away.

GADDING. Mercy — I am my own master!

BROWN. You mustn't think Miss Gadding is *employed* by anybody.

GADDING. I have never been more free from obligations in all my life.

BROWN. Let me introduce — Miss Bang, the concert singer; Miss Henrietta Gadding.

GADDING. Are you one of the Richmond Bangs?

BANG. No — why?

BROWN. Miss Gadding is an F.F.V., you know — the rest of us are merely from Chicago.

GADDING (*with dignity*). I spent a long visit with them once — most *lovely* people — and they *are* one of the finest families in Richmond.

BANG. I'm sorry — I don't know them.

BROWN. Now old Frick and Miss Van Kirk are the only ones missing. I wonder why in the world they don't show up.

GADDING. Miss Van Kirk will be here soon. I met her passing the house with her little foster-daughter.

BROWN. Did she pass, you say?

GADDING. She called out to me that she would come in a moment. I suppose she was bringing the girl home from school.

BROWN. But why did n't she bring the girl along?

GADDING. I did n't quite catch what she said.

ANNIE. There's a head on that little thing.

MOLLIE. On Adelaide, you mean?

GADDING. What do you call her?

ANNIE. By her name, Adelaide.

GADDING. How funny!

BANG. Don't you know Beethoven's *Adelaide?*

GADDING. What is it?

MOLLIE. It's tremendous — (*trying to hum the melody*) How does it go now?

BANG. You should hear my *Maestro* sing it — it's so beautiful that it hurts. It takes a Southerner to do it. (*Goes to the piano*) The passion of it — (*Sings*) "Adelaide! Adelaide!"

ANNIE. Please, sing all of it, Miss Bang!

MOLLIE (*almost simultaneously, ecstatically*). Oh, it's almost more than one can bear!

BANG. What am I thinking of? I who must n't sing *anything* but scales!

BROWN (*searching in the pile of sheet music*). Oh, won't you? One little song! I have got the music here.

BANG. Please don't ask me! Even what I did just now was a gross breach of the rules.

ANNIE (*deeply impressed*). Of course, one must be terribly careful when one studies singing as — as it should be.

BANG. I can assure you that if the *Maestro* knew I had sung even those few notes — oh, Lord preserve us!

MOLLIE. Is he so very strict, your — master?

BANG. Worse than that — like a flaming volcano — from the South, you know.

GADDING. Yes, all that come from there are very hot-tempered, I hear. The Countess is also from the *Midi.*

BANG. But such temperament!

BROWN. Oh, here 's Miss Frick now!

ANNIE (*to Miss Bang*). Can you hear her hawking (*imitating the sound*) — just like a man!

GADDING (*with severe disapproval*). And she — expectorates.

BANG. She does?

GADDING. Yes, when she is smoking.

FRICK (*entering; to Miss Brown*). Hello, old girl. And a happy birthday to you!

BROWN. Hello, old top! So happy to see you!

FRICK (*handing Miss Brown a small package*). A little something — not worth speaking of.

BROWN (*opening the package*). What can it be? — oh, just what I thought — genuine *Fleur de Lis.*

MOLLIE. In a cut-glass bottle.

BROWN (*takes out the stopper and sniffs at the bottle*). It reminds me of somebody — who is it now?

ANNIE. Let me — (*smells the bottle*) Yes, it makes me think of somebody, too.

FRICK. It ought to. Can't you get it?

MOLLIE (*who in the meantime has got hold of the bottle*). Wait a moment.

GADDING. It 's very pleasing.

MOLLIE. I know — Miss Van Kirk!

FRICK. Good guess! It's the perfume she always uses. (*To Miss Brown as she catches sight of Miss Bang*). Won't you introduce me.

BROWN. I beg your pardon! Miss Bang, the concert singer — Miss Frick, artist.

FRICK. Frick is right, but not the "artist." My profession is to copy pictures.

BROWN. Miss Frick is famous for her wonderfully faithful copies of some of the greatest masterpieces in the Louvre.

FRICK. Stuff and exaggeration! I make my living by copying old Masters — sort of grave-robbing, you know. (*To Miss Brown*) You have asked Miss Van Kirk, have n't you?

BROWN. Yes, she ought to be here any moment.

GADDING. She is on her way — I met her coming here.

FRICK. There is something wonderfully restful about that woman — an air that sets her apart.

BROWN. Yes?

FRICK. As if she had something we lacked.

MOLLIE (*dryly*). Luck, I suppose.

FRICK. Happiness, rather — and balance and — (*a little sharply*) a certain contented sweetness.

ANNIE. Old Frick growing sentimental!

BROWN. There is the child.

FRICK. Perhaps — well, anyhow, I am quite stuck on her.

GADDING. I suppose she was rather pretty in her youth!

FRICK. Pretty? She was too attractive for words!

ANNIE. They tell me she looked splendid on the stage.

BANG. Oh, has she been an actress?

FRICK. Yes, she had a try at it.

BROWN. I don't think anybody here has seen her act.

FRICK. I have.

BANG. Why did n't she keep it up?

FRICK. Because she had no talent. Just looks, and nothing else. The best she could do was to quit.

BANG. I understand she is doing very well over here.

BROWN. Yes, all the richest people are fighting for her. You see, she has had the very best training.

ANNIE (*with ill-concealed envy*). And a lot of pull to start with — that's the principal secret.

MOLLIE (*in the same tone*). Exactly!

FRICK (*to Miss Bang*). Miss Van Kirk makes from fifteen to twenty thousand francs a year. And she is very sensible. She puts away as much as she can.

BROWN. Hush — here she comes now.

MISS VAN KIRK (*showing, as she enters, that she has been hurrying*). How are you, Miss Brown. And a happy birthday!

BROWN. I am so glad to see you, dear. And I don't know how to thank you for the beautiful flowers you sent me!

VAN KIRK. Pardon me for being so late, but I had to take Adelaide from school first.

BROWN. Why did n't you bring her along? She is such a little darling.

VAN KIRK. She had a date with one of her friends — and so, you know, *we* were not in it.

[*She exchanges greetings with the other guests.*

BROWN. You know everybody but Miss Bang — the concert singer. May I introduce Miss Van Kirk?

ANNIE. I hear Adelaide is doing fine at school.

VAN KIRK. Yes, indeed — she has her name on the roll of honor.

GADDING. It's a noble deed, Miss Van Kirk, to take care of that poor little orphan.

VAN KIRK (*eagerly, with a slight touch of embarrassment*). Why, it is nothing but a pleasure.

MOLLIE (*a wee bit sourly*). And when one can afford it.

BROWN. Won't you please be seated.

VAN KIRK. How nice and warm it is in here.

BROWN (*at the table, busying herself with the tea things*). Now, the tea will be ready in a jiffy. Oh, say, Annie, put some wood on the fire, won't you!

[*Miss Annie looks after the fire and then seats herself in the chair farthest to the left and nearest to the fireplace; Miss Gadding picks the left sofa corner for herself and pulls out some knitting from the big bag she is carrying.*

MOLLIE (*to Miss Brown*). Now I'll hand the cups around while you pour.

[*Miss Frick has been studying the sketch on the easel. Now she begins to examine the canvasses that stand on the floor with their backs to the room. Miss Mollie gives the first cup to Miss Gadding and the next two to Miss Bang and Miss Van Kirk, who stand talking in the center of the foreground.*

VAN KIRK. Whom do you study with?

BANG. Professor Duberry.

VAN KIRK. Yes, he has a big reputation.

BANG (*with consecration*). Oh, he is marvelous!

BROWN. I think we might all sit down. Come on over here, Helen Frick.

[*When they have all seated themselves, they are grouped as follows from left to right: Miss Annie, Miss Bang, Miss*

Gadding, Miss Brown, Miss Van Kirk, Miss Frick, Miss Mollie.

GADDING. That's a remarkably good tea you have, Miss Brown.

BROWN. I get it from *Potin.*

MOLLIE. And those little cakes look delicious — I am going right at them, as you see.

BROWN. Please, help yourself!

ANNIE. Well, if it were not for the afternoon tea, I don't see how one could stand a Paris boarding-house at all.

BANG. It's not a pleasant form of existence.

BROWN. I have been thinking of getting away from this place.

ANNIE. Why take the trouble, my dear? I know them all — there's not the slightest difference between them.

GADDING. I think it ought to be quite agreeable to live where you can meet a lot of interesting people.

BROWN. Interesting people? Hysterical old women — that's the only kind of people you meet.

FRICK. You should do like me, children — get a room of your own and eat out.

BROWN. I have tried it — but an unescorted lady never gets decent attention from the waiters.

ANNIE. No, never!

FRICK. It's your own fault. When you want a plate of soup and a piece of pastry, and drink water, and give the waiter a *sou* for tip, how the deuce can you expect him to care. I have never had anything to complain of.

ANNIE. It's the only time I really miss a man — when I go to a restaurant, I mean.

BANG. I am with you there. There is something elegant about the way a man gives his orders, and handles the waiters, and all that. I was watching my *Maestro* the other day —

GADDING. I think it's most enjoyable to eat out, but I have so few opportunities.

MOLLIE. Oh, my dear Miss Gadding, you don't know what

it means to live — you who move in high society and have an Embassy for your home. If you had to live in boarding-houses and dairy restaurants day in and day out for years — Gee, but I do envy you at times!

GADDING (*rather pleased, and yet unable to acquiesce*). And I have moments when I envy — what shall I call them? — the modern women, who have a profession of their own and can be *quite* independent.

MOLLIE. It's waste of time, Miss Gadding — there's nothing to that sort of independence.

GADDING. And I think it would be such a rare blessing to feel really useful — as a nurse, for instance.

ANNIE. You can bet there is nothing particularly blessed about the kind of thing we have to go through. Or what do *you* say, Miss Van Kirk?

VAN KIRK. It is still worse for the doctors, I should say.

MOLLIE. No, to have the gift of an artist — that's the ideal, I think. To have it like Jessica, for instance — economically independent, and with her art to fill up her life!

BROWN. You get tired of that, too.

GADDING. Yes, to be an artist — it makes your life so rich, doesn't it?

BROWN (*with sudden bitterness*). In the old days old maids used to embroider — now they paint.

MOLLIE. Old maids — humph! Who's an old maid?

ANNIE. What an old-fashioned way of thinking, Jessica!

BROWN. *I* have no illusions left.

GADDING. But why shouldn't you?

BROWN. Do you know how old I am to-day?

ANNIE. I haven't given a thought to it.

MOLLIE. You want to brag of being the youngest, I suppose.

BROWN (*as if she hadn't heard the last remarks*). Forty years!

GADDING. That's incredible.

BROWN (*as before — with a strangely hard tonelessness*). Forty years — neither more nor less!

MOLLIE (*perfunctorily*). I really thought you were much younger.

FRICK. Why did you tell, girl? It makes the rest of us seem so old of a sudden.

[*The resulting pause is fraught with varied emotions.*

ANNIE. How time does run.

GADDING. What does it matter, I say, when you have something to keep you busy.

BROWN. Yes, when you have.

ANNIE. But you have, Jessica.

BROWN. Less and less. Do you think it's any fun to go on painting for twenty years without ever getting into an exhibition — not to talk of such a thing as selling.

MOLLIE. But you, Miss Bang, as a singer — what have you got to say? Does n't your song fill up your whole life? Is there a place in your soul for anything else?

BANG (*after some hesitation; a little stiffly*). I do enjoy taking lessons.

GADDING. Yes, but when you appear at a concert — I can imagine nothing more wonderful — to stand there and sing your heart out.

BANG (*more stiffly than ever*). I — I have n't tried it yet. (*Deep silence, suddenly broken when Miss Bang turns to Miss Van Kirk*) Why did you leave the stage, Miss Van Kirk — did you not enjoy it?

VAN KIRK (*with a deprecatory smile*). Oh, yes, but I don't think the public did.

FRICK. Which means that we have reached the pleasant stage where nobody needs to be jealous of anybody else.

ANNIE. Bully for you!

BROWN. That's so like you, old top! You know how to look things in the face without —

FRICK (*interrupting*). Anybody can do that. I am just as well off as any other mill-hand. Now I have stood twelve years in the same room in the Louvre and copied the same darned old picture — I might just as well do it at home without looking at the original — there is n't a brush

stroke in it that I don't know by heart. But it keeps me alive.

BROWN. So we don't have to be jealous of you, either.

FRICK. Do you mind if I light a cigar?

BROWN. Oh, I had quite forgotten — Here are cigarettes — Let's have a real good time now!

[*The cigarettes are passed round and everybody lights up — except Miss Gadding. In the meantime Miss Frick has pulled out a big cigar from somewhere and lighted it with all the loving care of a devotee.*

BROWN. Put a little more on the fire, Annie, while I serve the *liqueur*. Shall I turn on the lights?

SEVERAL (*at once*). No, no, — it's so cosy as it is!

BROWN. How about you, Miss Gadding?

GADDING. I knit just as well in the dark.

[*Miss Annie freshens up the fire; Miss Brown serves the cordial.*

BANG. And it is still raining.

GADDING. Yes, is n't it awful!

MOLLIE. What's that to all of you? I have to go back to my patient to-night — way out in one of the suburbs.

BANG. It's so nice to look at the fire when it flames up like that.

GADDING. It would be a pity to turn on the light — one can see to do anything here.

BROWN. Well, girls, here's to all of you!

FRICK. No, here's to the birthday child — and may she live and prosper forty years more!

EVERYBODY (*on their feet*). Hear, hear! — Three cheers! Long live Jessica!

ANNIE (*when at last quiet has returned and all are seated again*). I remember perfectly well when you celebrated your twentieth birthday, Jessica.

MOLLIE. So do I — what fun we had!

ANNIE. And what silly little fools we were!

BROWN (*with a little sigh*). Yes — yes. And little did we think then that we should be sitting here twenty years later, all three of us, in this rotten old hole in Paris.

ANNIE. Paris at that time — gee, what a dream!

BROWN. It's punk to get old!

[*She tries to get out her handkerchief without being seen.*

GADDING. I wonder if it is so bad?

BROWN. For a single woman — God knows it is! (*She wipes her eyes brazenly; Miss Van Kirk pats her left hand sympathetically; Miss Brown smiles gratefully through her tears*) I don't care if you laugh at me — but I am going to be just as sentimental as I please on my birthday.

GADDING. Of course, I do feel a little queer when my birthday comes around — but I thought I was the only one who got that sense of emptiness.

ANNIE (*stirring the fire restlessly with the poker*). What do you think the rest of us can expect from the future?

BROWN. You did the reasonable thing, Miss Van Kirk, by getting hold of a child while it was still time — *we* are too old to do even that.

VAN KIRK (*very quietly*). It *is* a great pleasure to have something waiting for you when you wake up in the morning.

GADDING. That's what I always say — it's the children I miss, not the man.

FRICK. That's an old story, my friend, and every old maid wants you to believe it.

MOLLIE. Right you are! Let's be honest, children — let's be honest for once. I would rather be a deserted wife or a "fallen" girl than an old maid. To be nothing but an old maid — it means emptiness ahead and emptiness behind. Oh, no, we have been pretty stupid — that's all. And here's to wisdom!

[*She empties her glass.*

ANNIE. Back up! Back up!

BANG (*almost simultaneously*). Really, that's going too far!

MOLLIE. You don't like to admit it, of course. And you, Annie, can't fool me.

BROWN. All right, let's admit the emptiness ahead. But as for the emptiness behind — why, girls, we have at least a few — memories.

GADDING. That's what I always say — nobody can rob you of your memories.

FRICK (*having rid herself rather loudly of a troublesome piece of tobacco leaf*). Is that so? Well, give us his name.

GADDING (*pleased, proud and confused*). Never — never!

MOLLIE. Tut, tut, Miss Gadding — out with it! Or we'll think you were merely blowing.

GADDING. I — I'll give you ten names and let you guess at the right one.

FRICK. Mercy me — have you had ten proposals?

MOLLIE. Oh, she's a deep one.

GADDING. No, I didn't mean it that way. What I said was that I would let you guess from ten names. But you mustn't guess aloud, you know.

FRICK. The plot is getting thicker and thicker.

GADDING. On the contrary, my dear Miss Frick. Are there not ten members of the Cabinet?

BANG. Something like that, I believe.

GADDING (*with a self-satisfied chuckle*). He's one of them.

ANNIE. So you might almost have been a member of the Cabinet!

GADDING (*carried away by the rare pleasure of having everyone's attention centered on herself*). Do you know what he always used to say to me? — You have noticed my very small head, I suppose? — He said always: "I should give anything to know what's going on in that little head."

[*Her last words are uttered with a sound lying half-way between sob and laughter; then she blows her nose in her handkerchief and resumes her knitting.*

MOLLIE. Annie might have been "the Colonel's lady."

ANNIE (*with pretended fierceness*). Shut up, Mollie.

MOLLIE. But she didn't care.

BROWN. You, with your figure, would have been well suited for an officer's wife.

FRICK. A regular *Madame le Général!*

ANNIE (*forgetting her resentment*). He *is* a general now, for that matter.

BROWN. Lord, Annie — you don't mean —

ANNIE. Don't you dare, Jessica!

BROWN. I'll bite off my tongue rather. But, I never! Why, that's great. It's good enough for a toast. Here's to *Madame le Général!*

FRICK. I want to drink to the Cabinet Lady — might have been.

BANG. And you, Miss Brown — supposing —

BROWN. Oh, I am the hostess.

ANNIE. Don't be so modest, Jessica. I know.

BROWN. You just try, Annie, and — Tit for tat!

ANNIE. No names, but — here's to *Madame le Professeur.*

FRICK. You don't tell me! Why, Jessica — one of the chaps at the art school? I bet you, it was him with the wooden leg.

BROWN. If any one of you says another word —

BANG (*suddenly, with conviction*). Yes, indeed, professors are *so* captivating!

[*General outburst of merriment followed by a slightly painful pause.*

MOLLIE. Well, say what you like, but there is *something* we have missed.

BROWN. I think everybody should follow your example, Miss Van Kirk, — while it is still time. It would be a compensation at least.

MOLLIE. Bothering about other people's children — no-o!

ANNIE. Why not, Mollie?

MOLLIE. Oh — it would be like having the headache of somebody else's jag. Not for me!

FRICK. Spoken like — a man!

MOLLIE (*with intense feeling and speaking to herself rather than to the others*). No, there's only one way — to think of oneself, and let the rest go hang. What else can be expected of an old maid. Oh, how stupid we have been — and now it's too late!

[*She flings her half-smoked cigarette into the fire.*

GADDING. But, my dear Miss Newman, that's quite another matter —

MOLLIE (*without listening to her*). Suppose we could live our lives over again, girls — do you think I'd care a hang for reputation and such things? No, I'd suit myself, no matter what happened. Gossip — what of it? Do you think it's any worse than ridicule, or pity, or, at the best, polite contempt?

FRICK. You are right, girl, and I think the more of you for saying it.

GADDING. Of course, you read about that kind of thing in the books —

ANNIE. And yet you haven't done it yourself, Miss Frick.

FRICK. And why — why, do you think? (*With a sudden break in her voice*) Oh, there is n't one of you I don't envy.

ANNIE. Us — why?

FRICK. All of you. (*Deeply moved*) Once in your life at least — perhaps only for a moment — some man's eyes have rested upon you in such a way that — that you can never forget it. And that's a joy I have never known.

BROWN (*after a brief, tense pause*). But we who know you, Helen — we think an awful lot of you. Is there no consolation at all in that?

FRICK. Yes, dear Jessica. — It's kind of you to let me share a little of your happiness — and I am thankful for it.

ANNIE. Our crippled, anemic happiness.

FRICK (*still showing strong emotion*). You don't know what you are talking of. If you smile at a child, it smiles back at you. If I stare, it shrieks with fright. No, you don't know how much happiness you have after all. — Were I like one of you, I should adopt ten children, if I had to pick them out of the gutter! You, Miss Van Kirk, you are the lucky one!

VAN KIRK. Yes, I think I am. And more — more than you imagine.

ANNIE (*dreamily*). She is such a sweet little thing, that girl of yours.

VAN KIRK. If you only knew — (*There is something in her tone that makes everybody turn toward her with wrapt attention*) If I told, then you *would* envy me.

FRICK (*almost in a whisper*). Tell us!

VAN KIRK. You all like Adelaide, I think —

ANNIE. Yes, as I said before, she —

VAN KIRK. I have not adopted her — she is my child — my own child! Now you know! It was silly of me to hide it, I think. It was like denying my own child — denying that she was mine. I am done with that. From now on I shall let the whole world know. Think of it — to have given birth to a child! It isn't happiness only — it's the great miracle — it's — Oh, there are no words to express it! And then *he* — he is neither a cabinet member nor a general — but what of it? He then and Adelaide now — and no emptiness ahead or behind. (*For a moment she is overcome by her emotions*) Yes, I am very, very happy!

[*Long pause; no one dares to look at Miss Van Kirk — or at any one else.*

FRICK. It has always seemed to me as if you radiated content and a sort of quiet happiness — now I can understand.

BROWN (*just to say something*). That's true.

[*Another pause.*

ANNIE (*in the businesslike, every-day voice she might use in the presence of a dangerously ill patient*). I think we must be going, Mollie.

GADDING (*rising from the sofa*). S-so must I.

MOLLIE (*rising and putting her hands to her cheeks that are still red and burning*). What a lot of nonsense we have been talking!

[*All are now on their feet.*

ANNIE. I think you'll have to turn on the light, Jessica, so we can sort out our baggage.

BROWN (*turning on the light*). Here you are.

[*Every face has a look as if it had been set in a mold, and all through the following scene no one dares to let her eyes meet*

those of anybody else; Miss Van Kirk goes first to the rack and begins to put on her overclothing.

MOLLIE (*turning to her sister in order to get away from the rack*). Now I remember — we put our hats in there.

[*She and her sister go to the alcove and stay there while putting on their hats.*

BANG (*with a glance toward the window*). And it's still pouring.

GADDING (*stowing away her knitting and pulling the strings of the bag to close it*). I wish I were home — without being wet, I mean.

[*Miss Gadding drops her bag on the table and makes for the rack, followed by Miss Frick, who has lighted a cigarette; Miss Van Kirk passes them on her way down the stage to get her bag, which is lying on the big table; then she goes over to the table on the right where she is left entirely alone while pulling on her gloves.*

BANG (*making for the door*). Lord, how am I to get hold of a cab!

MOLLIE (*with a hatpin in her mouth*). I think at the square.

ANNIE. You'll get the 'bus there anyhow.

[*Miss Bang and the Misses Newman relieve Miss Frick and Miss Gadding at the rack.*

BROWN (*coming down to the big table*). Isn't this your bag, Miss Gadding?

GADDING. A thousand thanks — I had almost forgotten it.

[*The Misses Newman also come forward to give themselves a final scrutiny in the big mirror over the fireplace.*

FRICK (*turning up the collar of her coat that is cut like a man's; speaking in her ordinary brusque manner*). Nobody headed for a restaurant, I suppose?

BROWN (*in a tone of relief*). There speaks the inveterate bachelor.

BANG (*coming down stage*). Then we are all ready.

GADDING (*at the big table*). One minute, Miss Bang — gloves are so troublesome when they have been wet. There now!

FRICK (*opening the perfume bottle*). May I steal a drop, Jessica?

BROWN. Please — you don't have to ask that, do you?

[*Miss Frick pours a couple of drops on her handkerchief.*

GADDING. Is everybody ready then? (*With a forced smile and a tone meant to indicate that it had not occurred to her until then*) One word before we part and go our various ways. — That about the cabinet member, you know — of course, it was nothing but a little fun.

BROWN. Of course!

BANG. I hope you don't think anybody.

ANNIE. And as for my colonel — I trust no one took him seriously.

BROWN. Heavens, Annie! Don't you think we know a joke when we hear it?

[*Everybody looks suddenly, automatically, at Miss Van Kirk, who is still standing by herself in the right forward corner, seemingly trying in vain to get her gloves buttoned. As she stands there, it is as if she had been stripped naked while all the rest remained properly clothed.*

GADDING. Well, Miss Brown, that was a most enjoyable party.

MOLLIE. I think we have had a splendid time, Jessica.

ANNIE. Old maids can also have some fun, it seems.

BANG. Yes, thank heaven, one *can* get along without men, after all.

BROWN. Well, I should say so.

BANG. Good-by, then. You'll come and see me some day, won't you?

BROWN. Indeed — with pleasure.

[*All are ready, yet they don't leave. They seem to hesitate about something that is not clear to themselves. Suddenly Miss Bang goes up to Miss Van Kirk.*

BANG (*in a tone of formal politeness that gives no clue whatever to her feelings or emotions*). Are you going my way, Miss Van Kirk?

VAN KIRK. No, I have to go for my — my daughter.

FRICK (*somewhat more loudly and brusquely than usual*). Ta-ta, Jessica. Quite a party, I should say. And we'll meet Sunday, I suppose.

BROWN (*conducting her guests to the door*). I hope everybody gets home all right. (*Everybody departs, leaving Miss Brown alone on the stage; she turns around and stands for a moment staring into vacancy; then she shakes herself and goes to the piano where her eyes fall on the music she had picked out for Miss Bang; and again she stands immovable, silent, staring at nothing; at last her lips move and she utters the one word*) Adelaide!—

CURTAIN

THE THÉÂTRE-LIBRE

THERE is something very challenging about the title, Théâtre-Libre; and, timid though he was in person, there is something very bold and challenging about Antoine in connection with the French theater. A comparative literary study of the '80s and '90s will show that the spirit of unrest, the bourgeois tendency of getting together so as to break up the old order, was characteristic of all phases of art in most European countries. What we have to-day of the new music, the new drama, the new art, was born then of a daring, experimental generation, which was insistent that to break from everything of tried tradition, to experiment in new forms and new contents were the only acceptable things to do.

No one has yet written for English readers a book dealing with these brave, young, adventurous spirits on the Continent, to compare with the inspiring, colorful survey by Holbrook Jackson, called "The Eighteen-Nineties" in England. Percival Pollard's "Masks and Minstrels" approached it; James Huneker's writing, with its peculiar incarnation of foreign impressionism through an American-born, rarely known in American letters, has suggested the possibilities. But the book has yet to be written.

Maeterlinck's early days are embedded in magazines, like *La Pléiade*, and similar bizarre organs, in whose pages the younger generations declared their theories, expressed their dreams as the only truth. They were under the inspiration of Mallarmé, Baudelaire, and Verlaine. Color and musical accents rose as incense from the altar of their building; there was a mad frenzy of symbol and mood; words became laden with fumes of phantasmagoria. They all lived in it, — Maeterlinck, Jean Ajalbert, Grégroire Le-

Roy, Camille Mauclair, Catulle Mendès, Ephraim Mikhaël, Albert Mockel, Pierre Quillard, Georges Rodenbach, Charles Van Lerberghe, Émile Verhaeren, and others.

Some ripened and others rotted; symbolism spread in opposition to naturalism. Of them all, however, Maeterlinck and Verhaeren most completely escaped, becoming more profoundly philosophical, more strikingly social in fervor.

The cradle of revolt was the club, — the coterie that met, like pilgrims on holy quest, to exchange their views, put their theories into practise, criticize their accomplishment, state their principles. Art magazines were born in a night, drew breath in a few issues, and expired.

In an atmosphere somewhat similar, the Théâtre-Libre came to be. André Antoine, born at Limoges, January 31, 1858, accounted himself one of the working-class. Employed by the Paris Gas Company, yet in his heart a devotee of the theater, he studied at the Conservatoire, and became an active participant in the clubs, Gymnase de la Parole and Cercle Gaulois, where he developed ideas about acting, divergently opposed to those held at the Comédie. He had small sympathy with what the historian of the Théâtre-Libre, Adolphe Thalasso, terms the "theater of life by movement", represented by such dramatists as Scribe (1791–1861), Émile Augier (1820–1889), Alexandre Dumas, *fils* (1824–1895), Sardou (1831–1908), and Sarcey (1827–1898). Much nearer to his sympathies were Balzac (1799–1850) and De Musset (1811–1857), who upheld the "theatre of movement by life." As Thalasso writes "*L'un est l'homme de théâtre genial qui a étouffé dans le métier la vie de ses héros. L'autre est l'auteur dramatique de génie qui n'a en d'autre objectif que l'humanité de ses créations.*"

But when Antoine went forth to declare his independence in the Théâtre-Libre, he was nearer Daudet (1840–1897), Zola (1840–1902), and Henri Becque (1837–1899). Like the discerning public that welcomed the naturalistic novelist, he had come to regard the theater as a place where morality and character, relieved of romantic trumpery,

should reign supreme. The head of the Cercle Gaulois was too conservative for him; he broke, and, in the Rue de l'Élysée des Beaux Arts, on the "Butte de Montmartre", financed from his Gas Company salary, he initiated the Théâtre-Libre. March 30, 1887, is a stupendous date in the history of the French theater; it launched the era of philosophical and social plays.

What was the supreme significance of Antoine to the younger generation of French playwrights? He gave them all an opportunity of seeing their plays on a stage, which none of the conservative managers would dare to encourage; he fostered the work of men who otherwise might never have attempted the dramatic form; he freed the actor from restrictions which had grown up into conventions of the old stagecraft; he brought to the French public the best work of foreign authors, like Tolstoi, Ibsen, Tourgeneff, Björnson, Hauptmann, and Heijermans. He not only turned his back on the theater of stereotyped passion, but allowed his players to speak while turning their backs to audiences.

Paris looked on agape. At first only the zealots were in the playhouse to see and to applaud; then came Zola and Daudet and others. Antoine shook the routine of the Gas Company; subscriptions came to him slowly but surely. In the Summer of 1887, he moved to the Gaieté Montparnasse and then to the Théâtre des Menus-Plaisirs. As Thalasso intimates, the theater of movement by life superseded the theater of life by movement; drama became more searching, acting became more simple and direct and clear-cut.

The list of players and plays mounted to generous proportions. Georges de Porto-Riche and Brieux might never have come to the theater had it not been for Antoine. Behind him, with belief in his policy, stood Jean Jullien, Gaston Salandre, Henri Céard, George Ancey, and Léon Hennique. On his playbills appeared the names of François de Curel, Jean Aicard, Lucien Descaves, Émile Fabre, Pierre Wolff, André Picard. What did Curel think of the Théâtre-Libre? "I believe [he writes] that the greatest service rendered

by the Free Theatre was that of liberating the modern French stage of all schools and literary coteries. A day will come when greater justice will be done our dramatic era, when the full extent of its originality and independence will be fully realized." And Brieux? "The little band which constituted the original Théâtre-Libre was a living company, an insolent band of enthusiasts."

Their convictions won recognition. In that fact lay reasons for the decline of the Théâtre-Libre. Lavedan was taken over by the Théâtre Français; Georges Ancey, Jean Jullien, and Porto-Riche went over to the Odéon. And was not the latter to claim Antoine, in 1906, as its *regisseur?* That is the way with all movements. The actors, trained in distinctive technique, soon feel circumscribed; the best of them seek broader, more remunerative fields. So, too, the dramatists: Brieux nurtured by Antoine; Maeterlinck by Lugné-Poë; Eugene O'Neill by the Provincetown Players — it is the same history in all quarters.

Antoine resigned from the Odéon in 1914, and in his letter he asserted to the Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts that his term had been "seven abominable years." Necessity and almost bankruptcy had taken him for that period from his chief desire.

It is also very natural that when a theory of art takes fire, its experts should find themselves followed, imitated, modified, and amplified. Antoine's influence may be traced in Georges Bourdon's Le Cercle des Escholiers (1886), in Paul Fort's Le Théâtre d'Art, in Albert Carré's Matinées du Jeudi (1891–1892) at the Vaudeville, in Lugné-Poë's Théâtre de l'Œuvre. One might carry it to the present, though the Free Theatre has now served its purpose, and seems a little old-fashioned, as Ibsen seemed "hedging" to such spirits as Wedekind and Schnitzler. We might say that Antoine still urges such people as Jacques Rouché with his Théâtre des Arts and Jacques Copeau with his Théâtre du Vieux-Columbier. The example, if not the style, of Antoine, is still dominant.

THE WOMAN WHO WAS ACQUITTED

THE GRAND GUIGNOL AND ANDRÉ DE LORDE

(1871–)

The Grand Guignol has been in existence for a quarter of a century, and, in spite of the fact that it is devoted to sensationalism, and the character of the plays given there borders on the horrible, and the vulgar, and the broad comedy line, it has won for itself widespread recognition because of the excellence of the technique marking the work of many of its writers. Its repertory caters to a certain morbidity, and the shudders that it encourages mark a type of literature singularly akin to Poe's tales. In fact, such fiction as "Dr. Tarr and Mr. Feather" is most in consonance with its policy. Many writers of excellence, like Octave Mirbeau and André de Lorde (the latter especially), have added to whatever distinction the Grand Guignol possesses.

I am fortunate in having the permission of M. de Lorde to include in this collection a play which illustrates adequately unity of technique, literary quality, sensational situation and definite purpose. "The Woman Who Was Acquitted" is sufficiently startling to excite the imagination of the most exacting melodrama lover; at the same time it is a criticism of the peculiar functioning of the French law,—a law which also finds expression in our own criminal proceedings. There is a long list of De Lorde plays, some of which I have noted here. He has written much in collaboration, Alfred Binet being one of his associates. The latter, writing an introduction to De Lorde's "Le Théâtre de la Peur", speaks of him as the Prince of Terror, and analyzes, in the manner

of a professor of physiological psychology at the Sorbonne, the reasons for his peculiarly constituted mind — a mind with none of the youthful exuberance of the poet, but with the anguish of a child who has in infancy been subject to fear.

Among its managers the Grand Guignol's history counts Max Maurey. Consult La Rousse, Tavernia, "Annuaire de la Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs dramatiques", and Stoullig's "Les Annales du Théâtre et de la Musique."

WORKS

Chouchou.
Le costume est de rigeur.
Don Juanet.
Attaque nocturne.
L'Amoureuse conspiration.
Les Charcutiers.
Comédienne.
Du coucher au lever.
Le Cœur de Floria.
Cochon d'enfant.
Le Cerveau d'un imbécile.
La Délivrance.
La Bête.
L'Enfant gâté.
La Flambée.
Hermance a de la vertu.
Héritiers.
Les Invisibles.
L'Idiot.
La Lettre.
Le Monde inconnu.
Mariage d'amour.
Petite bourgeoise.
Sous les marronniers.
Miss Chipp.
Le méchant cocu.
Le mari malgré lui.
Napoléon III.
Oiseaux de guerre.
Visions.
40 H. P.
Rêve d'un soir.

A qui le tour? 1908. With Jean Marsele.

L'Acquittée. Théâtre de la Peur.

L'Affaire Boreau. With Eugène Morel.

L'Amour en Cage. (3 acts) 1912. J. Marsele. Funck-Brentano.

Au Rat Mort. With Pierre Chaine. Théâtre d'Épouvante.

Au Téléphone. (2 acts) With Charles Foley. In "Les Drames Mystérieux."

Bagnes d'Enfants. (4 acts) After the novel, "En Correction", by Edouard Quet. 1910. With Pierre Chaine.

Barateric. (2 acts) With Masson Forestier. Théâtre de la Peur.

La bonne Amie. 1916. With Henri Bauche.

Une bonne farce. 1898. After the novel of J. Reibrach.

Un Concert chez les Fous, (2 acts) 1909. With Charles Foley.

Consultation de 1 à 3. Saynète. With Jean Marsele.

Cordon sanitaire. With Georges Montignac.

Dans la Nuit. (5 acts) 1898. With Eugène Morel.

La dernière Torture. With Eugène Morel. Théâtre d'Épouvante.

La Dormeuse. (2 acts) Théâtre d'Épouvante.

Les drames mystérieux: Au Téléphone, pièce en deux actes; Un Concert chez les Fous, pièce en deux actes; La Nuit Rouge, pièce en un acte. With Charles Foley.

Ernestine est enragée. 1913. With Georges Montignac.

Figures de Cire. (2 acts) 1912. With Georges Montignac.

L'Homme mystérieux. (3 acts) 1910. With Alfred Binet.

L'horrible expérience. (2 acts) With Alfred Binet. Théâtre de la Peur.

L'innocent. 1909. With Eugène Morel.

Une Leçon à la Salpétrière. (2 acts) Théâtre d'Épouvante.

Madame Blanchard.

Madame Hercule. 1910. With Georges Montignac.

Monsieur, Madame, et . . . les autres. 1893.

Napoléonette. 1921. With Jean Marsele.

La Nuit rouge. In Les Drames Mystérieux. With Charles Foley.

L'Obsession. (2 tableaux) With Alfred Binet. Théâtre d'Épouvante.

La Petite Roque. (3 acts) After the novel of Guy de Maupassant. 1911. With Pierre Chaine.

La Soupape. 1905. With Bonis-Charancle.

Sur la Dalle. With Georges Montignac. Théâtre d'Épouvante.

Le Système du Docteur Goudron et du Professeur Plume. After Edgar Allan Poe. Théâtre d'Épouvante.

Terre d'Épouvante. (3 acts) 1907. With Eugène Morel.

La Victoire, ou, L'Affaire

de l'Impasse des "Trois Poulets."

La Vieille. (2 acts) From the novel of Guy de Maupassant. 1903.

Y avait un arrêt à Dijon. 1903. With Jean Marsele.

Paul Reboux and Charles Muller. [Burlesque] "Le Docteur Coaltar." À la manière d'André de Lorde.

THE WOMAN WHO WAS ACQUITTED

(*L'Acquittée*)

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT

BY ANDRÉ DE LORDE

TRANSLATED BY

MONTROSE J. MOSES

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TO ALBIN LABROUSSE

Characters

THE JUDGE
THE DOCTOR
THE ATTORNEY
COUSSOL, Court attendant
ROBLOT, Court attendant
MADAME MÉNARD

THE WOMAN WHO WAS ACQUITTED

The Judge's chambers of the Criminal Court in a large town of the province. A door at the back opens into the hall. A door to the left leads to a corridor. A large window is at the left and toward the back. Wainscoting. Armchairs upholstered in green. There is a general air of austerity about the room. A large table. On the other side of the room, toward the front, there is a small table, — that of the Clerk of the Court. Bookshelves are on the wall.

Evening comes on gradually during the act.

At the rise of the curtain, Roblot, a Court attendant, is arranging some documents on the table.

Coussol, another Court attendant, enters from the left.

COUSSOL. Good day!

ROBLOT (*turning*). Hello, Coussol! (*They shake hands*) How are you?

COUSSOL. First rate.

ROBLOT. So the marriage has taken place? Your daughter is satisfied?

COUSSOL. Delighted. She has married a smart boy. She will be very happy.

ROBLOT. So much the better! When did you get back?

COUSSOL. This morning. (*A pause*) Say, something unusual is going on here.

ROBLOT. You bet!

COUSSOL. Going through the halls just now, I heard such noise, such cries — such stamping of feet! It came from the Criminal Court?

ROBLOT. Yes.

COUSSOL. Who is up for trial?

ROBLOT. A woman named Juliette Ménard.

COUSSOL. What has she done?

ROBLOT. She is accused of having strangled a little girl of six — in the house where she was governess — the home of an architect.

COUSSOL. Who is defending her?

ROBLOT. A well-known lawyer from Paris — M. Henri-Robert.

COUSSOL. Oh! then — she will be acquitted.

ROBLOT. First of all, there are no proofs — and besides, I am sure she is innocent. She has a fine figure! If she only were not so timid — but she says nothing — she does not know how to help herself — that woman has no guile: she is not at all cunning! But even so, I don't believe she'll be sentenced!

COUSSOL. Oh, you know the Court! With the kind of juries we have now, it's a lottery! [*A small bell is heard ringing.*

COUSSOL (*listening*). Someone's ringing.

ROBLOT (*listening also*). Yes.

COUSSOL. The jury has finished its deliberations.

ROBLOT. The Court is sitting again.

COUSSOL. I'll be curious to know the verdict.

ROBLOT. That's easy. (*Going toward the back, and looking at his watch*) Guess how long they've been out?

COUSSOL. I don't know.

ROBLOT. A quarter of an hour — scarcely that. A quarter of an hour for such a case!

COUSSOL. And we complain of the slowness of justice!

ROBLOT (*half-opening the door at the back*). Hush! Listen! (*A distant voice is heard slowly uttering some words, of which the following only are discernable:* "— and before man — the decision of the jury is not — ") (*To Coussol*) That's it, she is acquitted! I was sure of it! (*Silence in the Court; then — suddenly — tumult, applause, protest, various cries from the public*) There, they're going on like mad!

COUSSOL (*closing the door*). If she had been condemned, they would have carried on in the same way.

ROBLOT. The crowd is a beast! (*Noise of conversation is heard off left*) Listen, here comes His Honor.[1] He must be furious!

COUSSOL. Why?

ROBLOT. Just think: an acquittal!

COUSSOL. Then, old fellow, good-night. — I'm off. [*Coussol exits right, after having quickly shaken Roblot's hand. The Judge enters from the left, in his red robe, and wearing the decoration of the Legion of Honor. He is followed by an Attorney.*

JUDGE (*continuing a conversation as he enters*). — It was his own fault. He has conducted the prosecution with weakness!

ATTORNEY (*agreeing*). Quite so!

JUDGE. He should have been the lawyer for the defense; he could not have done better.

ATTORNEY. That's so.

JUDGE. I would have come to the rescue several times, and given legal interpretation to certain points in the arguments — but since the last Circular of Instruction, a Judge is not allowed any more to give opinion. (*Pause*) He is not even able to hold any opinions at all. (*Calling*) Roblot!

ROBLOT (*who is at the back, immovable, deferential*). Your Honor.

JUDGE. What are you standing there for?

ROBLOT. I am doing nothing, Your Honor.

JUDGE. My hat — my coat — Go!

ROBLOT. Immediately, Your Honor. [*He goes to a closet, right, and takes out a frock coat, waistcoat and hat.*

JUDGE (*beginning to dress*). I said only yesterday to Latour: in this case, we are headed straight for an acquittal.

ATTORNEY (*putting his brief case on the table, and sitting down*). It's most unfortunate.

[1] TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. In order to accord with American custom, the title "M. le Prêsident" is given as "Judge", and the direct address as "Your Honor" or "His Honor."

JUDGE. This makes three acquittals in one session.

ATTORNEY (*shaking his head*). Three acquittals!

JUDGE (*sharply*). Nothing hurts a man in my position more than that.

ATTORNEY. And did you notice the jury? — It didn't understand much!

JUDGE. The jury never does understand anything. It's true, this case was very complicated. (*Seeing the Attorney rise and take up his brief bag*) You are going?

ATTORNEY. Yes, Your Honor, I am somewhat pressed for time. Some friends are coming in this evening for dinner. Until to-morrow. We start at nine o'clock?

JUDGE. At nine. Good-by, my dear sir.

[*As the Attorney goes out, he meets the Doctor just entering.*

DOCTOR. Excuse me, Mr. Attorney.

ATTORNEY (*leaving*). Go in, Doctor.

DOCTOR. His Honor is still there?

ATTORNEY. Yes — he is finishing dressing.

DOCTOR. Thanks. (*He shakes hands with the Attorney, who exits. Doctor enters, and hastens toward the Judge, who is in his shirt-sleeves*) Good day, Your Honor.

JUDGE. What are you doing here, Doctor?

DOCTOR. I have some news for you from Baudoin, your Clerk of the Court.

JUDGE. You are kind. He is better?

DOCTOR. Much better. I feared typhoid fever at first. False alarm! One month's rest, and he will be on his feet.

JUDGE. So much the better! I have needed him very badly — there is much to do here. Nothing new at the Palace of Justice to-day?

DOCTOR. No. Why?

JUDGE. You saw the crowd outside? [*At this moment, Roblot exits left.*

DOCTOR. Yes, there was a terrible mob.

JUDGE. And with it all, there was no accident?

DOCTOR. Heavens, no. Two pickpockets were arrested. (*Laughing*) I had nothing to do with that.

JUDGE (*laughing also*). Of course not!

DOCTOR. And now I must leave you. Good-by.

JUDGE. Wait for me. Are you in a hurry?

DOCTOR. No. [*Pause.*

JUDGE (*finishing his dressing*). You are familiar with the case we were trying?

DOCTOR. The woman Ménard, the strangler?

JUDGE. Yes. I would like very much to have your opinion on this case. There is a phase of it which has worried me ever since it began, and which bothers me now.

DOCTOR. The jury has just acquitted her, I believe?

JUDGE. Yes, unanimously.

DOCTOR. Why?

JUDGE. Why? For a very simple reason: her lawyer showed more skill than our Advocate General. Now, between us, I must say the case is not at all clear. This woman's past has been entirely ignored. She lived twenty years abroad — we do not know where. We have written for information, but the addresses she gave us were no good. The letters have all been returned, marked "Unknown." (*Silence*) Ever since her return to France two years ago, she has not been idle; she became governess in bourgeois homes, where there were children, and each time — a few days after her arrival — a child has met sudden death.

DOCTOR. This happened several times?

JUDGE. Three times. If this is a mere coincidence, it is nevertheless terribly suspicious looking. The jury, ordinarily so prone to question, attached no weight to it, did not even challenge it. Do you know what her lawyer's chief argument has been? He has emphasized especially the point that her acts conveyed no justifiable motive, no motive in which interest or passion was involved.

DOCTOR. What might that prove?

JUDGE. It might prove that she was not guilty —

DOCTOR. It might have proven, rather, that she was irresponsible.

JUDGE (*interested*). Ah, you believe that? [*He signs to the Doctor to be seated.*

DOCTOR (*sitting down; the Judge also*). When I see someone who has committed a crime which cannot be accounted for, which has no reasonable motive attached to it, I, being a doctor, always think of insanity. And in three fourths of the cases, I make no mistake.

JUDGE. What you say is very interesting.

DOCTOR. If I had been in the Advocate General's place, I should have called for a Commission on Lunacy to examine the prisoner; and thus, instead of freeing her, they might have shut her up in an asylum. That probably would have been better for all concerned.

JUDGE. Obviously, — but only on one condition, that she was without the shadow of a doubt guilty of those three deaths.

DOCTOR. Don't you believe it?

JUDGE. Really, I don't know anything about it.

DOCTOR (*sighing*). You know nothing, and yet you would not take Madame Ménard into your house as a nurse-maid!

JUDGE. The devil, no! But this is only an impression. I want to know the truth, and what gets me is that I shall probably never know. [*He rises, takes his brief bag and his hat from the table.*

DOCTOR (*rising also*). You are going home?

JUDGE. Yes — (*Resuming the thread of his thought*) And to think that this woman knows the truth I seek. (*Strikes his forehead*) It is there behind her forehead. If only one could get into that head.

DOCTOR. Oh, oh! — my dear Judge!

JUDGE. You don't agree with me?

DOCTOR. Surely. But I must remind you that since the Revolution, torture has been done away with.

JUDGE (*earnestly*). Nevertheless, there are times when I say to myself, that's foolish. (*Continuing*) You surely understand what I mean, don't you? Don't make me out more cruel than I am.

DOCTOR. No, no, I understand quite well. (*Sighing*) It is what we would call scientific curiosity. (*After a moment's reflection*) Listen, I am going to tell you of a case which, in view of this one, will interest you.

JUDGE (*laying down his brief bag*). So!

DOCTOR. During the trial yesterday, I came into Court for a few moments.

JUDGE. Just as the cross-questioning ended, was it not?

DOCTOR. Yes. Well, I watched the prisoner. And I was surprised. — Her face recalled to my mind a sick woman I had known — oh, more than thirty years ago! — in the clinic of Charcot, at the Salpétrière. She had the same sallow complexion, the same bloodshot eyes, the same quivering of the jaw. And afterwards, this indefinable similarity made me think that I had seen her before.

JUDGE. Perhaps it is the same woman.

DOCTOR. Oh, no! my patient was much too old — she has died since. I am sure of it. (*Sighing*) For I performed the autopsy. I thought of that woman when I saw this one at the trial. (*Pause*) What I am about to say proves absolutely nothing, my dear Judge, absolutely nothing, let me say in advance —

JUDGE. Go on, nevertheless.

DOCTOR (*after a time*). I have in my mind a very excellent picture of the woman I have just referred to, because she was, in the highest degree, a hypnotic subject. With one sudden shock, one harsh command, one look, she could be instantly put into a cataleptic state — and in such condition, she could be made to tell those innermost secrets which were to her of greatest interest to hide. She surrendered to us the very depths of her soul. What do you think of that?

JUDGE (*sighing*). I think of the Instructions which forbid our employing hypnotism as a means of legal investigation.

DOCTOR. That Circular is unfortunate.

JUDGE. Besides, now, on the pretext that formerly abuses had been allowed in Court, we are forbidden to use any means whatsoever to prove the culpability of a prisoner.

We can set no traps to catch him; the defendant's lawyer is always on the alert to thwart us, to tell his client what answers to make us. We have to wait for the prisoner's own admissions. Humanity demands this much!

DOCTOR. It is not humanity — it is an imbecile sentimentality which can have but one result: to increase criminality throughout France to alarming proportions.

JUDGE. You are right there. (*To Roblot, who returns*) Say, Roblot —

ROBLOT. Your Honor.

JUDGE. I have left my brief case in Court. Will you go and look for it and bring it to me?

ROBLOT. Immediately, Your Honor.

[*He hastens out back rapidly.*

DOCTOR. I bet you that you are going to spend the night reading the case all over again.

JUDGE. What do you expect? It's pulling me very strongly. Beneath my calmness, the thing interests me.

DOCTOR. We are all interested!

JUDGE (*to Roblot, who returns with the case*) Thanks. Put it there. (*Roblot lays it on the large table*) Is the hall empty?

ROBLOT. Not yet, Your Honor. Many people were still there.

JUDGE. And the defendant — Where is she? — In the detention room? Is she still in custody, or have they let her go?

ROBLOT. Yes, she's free, Your Honor, but she has n't gone yet, because people still crowd the corridors.

JUDGE. Where is she, then?

ROBLOT. She is out there in the hall, by the side, Your Honor. [*He points to the left.*

JUDGE. So that's it. (*Roblot starts to go toward the right*) Stop. There is something that occurs to me — I have something to ask her. Tell one of the guards to fetch her here.

ROBLOT. Very well, Your Honor. [*He goes out left.*

JUDGE. I think it might interest you to see this woman at close range.

DOCTOR (*agreeing*). You are right, yes!

JUDGE. Go over there and sit at that table. (*Pointing to the Clerk's table*) My Clerk's — Make believe you are writing — I will have her sit down on the pretext of getting some information. And while I am doing this, you can watch her at your ease, without her suspecting anything. (*A noise is heard off left*) Ready! [*The door to left is opened, and a Guard appears.*

GUARD (*entering, and saluting in military fashion*). Your Honor, Mme. Ménard is here.

JUDGE. Show her in. [*Some time passes. The Guard reappears, followed by the woman Ménard.*

JUDGE (*going forward to meet her*). Come in for a minute, Mme. Ménard. (*To the Guard*) You might just as well go. Wait outside in the corridor. (*The Guard leaves. To Mme. Ménard, who regards him fixedly*) You recognize me?

MME. MÉNARD (*defiantly*). Surely. For three days I have seen only you!

JUDGE. I will not detain you long. You ought to be anxious to get away. (*Pause*) Where will you go, when you do leave?

MME. MÉNARD. I am going home.

JUDGE. Where is that?

MME. MÉNARD. At Poitiers!

JUDGE. You have a family?

MME. MÉNARD. No, I am alone.

JUDGE. Will you look for another place?

MME. MÉNARD. Surely — I am not rich.

JUDGE (*looking steadily at her*). For a place where there are no children this time!

MME. MÉNARD (*without a quiver*). Why?

JUDGE. Surely that would be best!

MME. MÉNARD (*straightening herself*). I am innocent!

JUDGE (*sighing*). You are acquitted.

MME. MÉNARD (*repeating with emphasis*). I am innocent!

JUDGE. I hope for your sake that you are! [*Pause.*

MME. MÉNARD. May I go now?

JUDGE. No. Wait a minute.

MME. MÉNARD. Then I must ask you to let me sit down. The strain I have been under has tired me. [*She sits.*

JUDGE. There is some little thing I would like to ask you. (*Pretends to look for something on the table*) Where the devil have I put my brief bag? (*He goes to the table where the Doctor, pretending to write, is watching Mme. Ménard attentively. To the Doctor, in a low voice*) Well!

DOCTOR (*same play*). I was not deceived!

JUDGE. Ah!

DOCTOR. She is quite the same type of woman. That's my impression — but I am not certain, of course.

JUDGE. Shall I let her go now?

DOCTOR. Keep her a little while longer — I must study her more — and let me do —

JUDGE. Do what?

DOCTOR. You shall see! [*All this dialogue low and rapid.*

JUDGE. Very well, then. (*Returning to his table. To Mme. Ménard*) I don't imagine you'll leave town without thanking your lawyer. He defended you well, eh?

MME. MÉNARD. Surely.

JUDGE. For, without him, you know — There are some points in your case — I know your case well. (*Opens his brief bag, which Roblot has brought him*) I don't want to discuss the trial again — but, with another jury, it might have turned out very badly for you.

MME. MÉNARD. Why do you tell me that? I see your game plainly! You are trying to question me again — to make me suffer! It is a shame! yes, a shame! (*Rising, and in a tone of really profound grief*) Instead of asking my pardon for all the misery, all the torture I have endured for these past four months — four months of prison — and all for nothing — because Justice was deceived! Ah, Justice helps to martyrize a poor woman who is

innocent. (*Cries piteously*) For I am innocent, do you hear, Your Honor, I am innocent! With my last breath I will cry it aloud — I am innocent! — I am — [*Suddenly the Doctor, who, during this scene, without her noticing him, has risen and slipped behind her, stands before her, and looks her steadily in the eyes, at the same time grasping her securely by the wrists.*

MME. MÉNARD (*uttering a cry*). Ah! [*Then she stands rigid, as if petrified.*

JUDGE. What have you done?

DOCTOR. Look at her!

JUDGE (*looking at her*). She is asleep.

DOCTOR. Sound! I did n't think I would succeed so easily.

JUDGE. Asleep so suddenly! That surprises me. (*He looks at her more closely*) She does not stir!

DOCTOR. She will remain like that for hours.

JUDGE. Are you absolutely certain she does not pretend?

DOCTOR. What motive should she have for doing so?

JUDGE. I can't say, but then —

DOCTOR (*taking a pin from the lapel of his coat, and pricking her hand*). See, I prick her until the blood comes — she does not react —

JUDGE. True! (*Pause*) You are going to waken her?

DOCTOR. If you wish — but (*looking around him*) can't we profit by this to —

JUDGE. To?

DOCTOR (*emphasizing his words*). To know.

JUDGE. Possibly — but — [*He also looks around him.*

DOCTOR. Since we are alone —

JUDGE. Wait until I see — (*He opens the door at the back*) There is no one in the corridor. (*He shuts and bolts it*) And here! — [*He goes to the right and closes and bolts that door as well.*

DOCTOR (*at right*). We must close this also. (*He hurries to the door left and closes it*) Is that all right?

JUDGE (*who has closed the door to the right*). It is.

DOCTOR. Now watch what happens. — (*He looks at Mme.*

Ménard fixedly, and in a harsh tone) You hear me? (*She makes a sign with her head. The Doctor to the Judge*) She hears me.

JUDGE. Then you are going to question her?

DOCTOR. Yes. (*To Mme. Ménard*) Since you hear me, you will answer what I ask you. I wish — do you hear? — I wish you to answer me. (*Pause and in a deep voice*) These three unfortunate children — it is you who killed them. Speak! (*Silence*) It is you? It is surely you?

JUDGE (*listening*). Well?

DOCTOR. She doesn't answer.

JUDGE. Yet she heard you distinctly?

DOCTOR. Yes, but she does not wish to answer.

JUDGE. She does not *wish?* She then has still a will of her own?

DOCTOR. You can see for yourself.

JUDGE. There is no way of forcing her?

DOCTOR. I don't know how —

JUDGE. Then this experiment was useless?

DOCTOR. I fear so. This will you mention — she guards it even in her sleep. She has an iron resolve.

JUDGE. I should say so! At any rate you cannot tear the secret from her.

DOCTOR. Wait. You have yonder the facts of the case?

JUDGE (*showing the brief on the table*). On this table —

DOCTOR. I want a detail. (*He sits before the table and opens the paper*) Do you know where she committed — (*correcting himself*) where she might have committed her last alleged crime?

JUDGE. That's easy to find out. I know the brief, and I will go and get it. Yonder is the cross-examination. (*Showing a paper in the package*) Wait — (*Then suddenly*) Doctor! She is getting up. [*He points to Mme. Ménard, who, still asleep, has begun to stir, and to walk about the room.*

DOCTOR (*looking at her*). Wait, wait!

JUDGE. What is she doing? (*Pause*) One might almost believe that she was looking for something!

DOCTOR. How do I know! This hypnotic sleep awakens many memories! [*He continues to read the verbal process which the Judge has shown him. — Mme. Ménard walks in the room; she makes gestures, as though she were getting some things together and putting them in a basket.*

JUDGE. She doesn't see us?

DOCTOR. No, she thinks she's at home. You see, she is doing her housework.

JUDGE. That's curious!

DOCTOR. Yes. (*He goes near Mme. Ménard, and speaks to her*) It is cold — It is snowing — The family are out — It is evening — You are alone — The child is there — [*He points to one corner of the room.*

MME. MÉNARD (*in a strange voice*). Ah! [*She gives a diabolical smile, and then slowly proceeds toward an imaginary cradle, whose covers she arranges, singing a lullaby in a curious voice; she listens, looks about her, then returns to the crib, tiptoeing, and bending over so as to see the sleeping child; suddenly her figure shakes convulsively, she utters a cry, and stretches out her hands, as though making a motion to strangle.*

JUDGE. Ah! This is terrible! Wake her up! Wake her up!

DOCTOR. The truth — we know it now!

JUDGE. Yes. Wake her up!

DOCTOR (*sharply*). I will waken her, after we have handcuffed her. You can tell her all she's done in her hypnotic state. She will get excited. — You will force her to confess.

JUDGE. A confession obtained in this way is not valid in a court of law.

DOCTOR. But there is no doubt, is there? — This woman has surely committed the crimes of which she was accused.

JUDGE. Personally, I am convinced that there is not a doubt. But these confessions, under such conditions — because of our effective legislature, — are of no more value than if they had been extracted by torture.

DOCTOR. But this woman was not compelled by force to confess a crime of which there is still some doubt as to

whether she committed it or not. — You have seen for yourself! — Of her own volition she reënacted the scene of her crime — or at any rate she has lived it — before you. You cannot compare this with torture!

JUDGE. You are right, Doctor. But even if she confessed to it, it would be too late now. She has been acquitted. And a person who has been legally acquitted cannot be re-arrested or accused again of the same crime, according to our criminal code. [*The two men look at each other. A pause.*

JUDGE. Wake her up! [*He goes and unbolts the doors right and left. The Doctor approaches Mme. Ménard, and blows on her eyes. She slowly wakens.*

MME. MÉNARD. What? How? What is it? Where am I?

JUDGE (*approaching*). You are in the Judge's Chambers of the Criminal Court.

MME. MÉNARD. What has taken place? (*As if she suffered*) My head is heavy — (*She looks in turn at the two men*) What have you done to me? Surely you have given me something to drink — a drug.

JUDGE. No.

MME. MÉNARD. To make me speak — yes — to make me speak! You have no right! I will complain to my lawyer. (*To the Doctor*) And you, who are you?

JUDGE. Monsieur is a doctor — and he happens to be here because, a moment ago, while talking with me, you were taken suddenly ill. — No doubt the excitement of the trial has exhausted you! — If you are feeling better now, you can go. (*Looking at the Doctor*) You are free.

MME. MÉNARD. Ah! That's good.

[*The Judge rings a bell. Pause. The Guard appears at the left.*

JUDGE (*to the Guard*). You will go with Madame as far as the exit to the Palace of Justice — the exit yonder — on the side of the street. (*He indicates through the window*) There would still be too many people on the square. It would be dangerous. [*Mme. Ménard, after staring rudely at the*

Judge and the Doctor, in wretched anguish, as though she still mistrusted them, goes slowly toward the back, turning round several times. She is followed by the Guard.

Alone once more, the two men look at each other silently. A long pause.

JUDGE (*still moved by what has happened*). I needn't ask you, Doctor, to let nothing get abroad of what has taken place here — about this experience.

DOCTOR. Rest easy.

JUDGE. If the papers should learn of it, they would make a great pother over it! They would regard me as an executioner — as an inquisitor.

DOCTOR (*with bitterness*). They much prefer to let loose on society this wild beast, this dangerously insane creature!

JUDGE (*who has gone to the window, and who looks out*). Ah! Look! — there she goes — She turns around — One would say she guesses we are here behind this window.

DOCTOR (*who also looks out*). Yes — and mark, now that she has nothing more to fear — how there is a certain ferocity to her bearing.

JUDGE. Who knows what she will do now?

DOCTOR. I know — She will continue to strangle little children!

[*The curtain slowly falls on these two men who, silent, despairing, continue to look out of the window.*

CURTAIN

FIVE LITTLE DRAMAS

HENRI LAVEDAN

(1859–)

Lavedan, born at Orléans, on April 9, 1859, had only a slight connection with the Théâtre-Libre. He had been educated at a small school near his native town, had gone thence to the Lycée Louis-le-Grand and the Institution Bossuet at Paris, and later to Jesuit schools at Nantes and Poitiers. He was completing his studies in Paris when the War of 1870 began, and Henri was placed with priests until the conflict was over. Then he was graduated, and one year at the law determined him against its practice as a future profession.

It was at this time that he wrote his numberless little dialogues, his so-called "les Quarts d'heure", which Antoine, in 1888, on March 23, produced, despite the derision hurled at such "tag ends." He had written them in collaboration with Gustave Guiches. I find, in Antoine's "Mes Souvenirs", under date of August 7, 1887, the following entry:

"*Henri Lavedan, un jeune qui a déjà publié plusieurs bouquins estimés, veut me proposer quelque chose pour le Théâtre-Libre; il m'attend avec son collaborateur, Gustave Guiches, dans un restaurant chic, chez Perroncel, en face la gare Saint-Lazare. Dans un cabinet, les deux écrivains me lisent deux petits tableaux qu'ils appellent* les Quarts d'heure, *des notations brèves d'un mordant et d'un relief singuliers.*"

A study of the later Lavedan, author of "Le Prince d'Aurec", "Le Marquis de Priola", "Catherine" (played in New York by Annie Russell), "Le Duèl" (with Otis Skinner and

Fay Davis), and "Sire" (in which Otis Skinner was featured) has no place in this brief survey.

The selections here taken from "Les Beaux Dimanches" reveal the skill with which Lavedan writes dialogue, using colloquialisms difficult to translate; also they indicate the sharp variety of his observation, and his range of interest and sympathy. With such short-hand sketches, the future French Academician (1898) began his career.

WORKS

Quarts d'heure. 1888. With Gustave Guiches. See "Five Little Plays", *Poet Lore*, Boston, Vacation Number, 1917.

Une Famille. 1891. Crowned by the French Academy.

Le Prince d'Aurec. 1892. Translated by B. H. Clark, "Three Modern Plays from the French", Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1914.

Les deux Noblesses. 1894.

Viveurs! 1895.

Catherine. 1898. Produced in the United States.

Le nouveau Jeu. 1898.

Le vieux Marcheur. 1899.

Les Médicis. 1901.

Le Marquis de Priola. 1902.

Varennes. (7 tableaux) 1904. In collaboration with G. Lenôtre (L. L. T. Gosselin).

Le Duèl. 1905. Produced in the United States.

Sire. 1909. Produced in the United States.

Le Goût du Vice. 1911.

Servir. (2 acts) 1913.

La Chienne du Roi. (1 act) 1913.

Pétard. 1914.

Dialogues de guerres. 1916.

Les Sacrifiées. 1917. With Miguel Zamacoïs.

Note also the following:

C'est servi. Dialogues.

Les Jeunes, ou, L'Espoir de la France. Collection of plays in one act.

Leurs Bêtes. Short plays.

Les Marionettes. Short plays.

Le Lit. Short plays.

Les Petites Visites. Short plays.

À propos de poupées. Saynète. 1907.

Les Beaux Dimanches. Dialogues. 1898.

Baignoire 9. Dialogues. 1902.

Les Croix. Saynète. (1 act) 1907.

La dette et la dot. Saynète. (1 act) 1907.

Deux ménages. (1 act) 1913.

Les deux orphélines. Saynète. 1907.

Le grand prix. Saynète. 1913.

FIVE LITTLE DRAMAS

BY HENRI LAVEDAN

From "Les Beaux Dimanches"

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

SIBYL COLLAR HOLBROOK

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ALONG THE QUAYS

Characters

GAFFER PEZOU
A COLLECTOR, an elderly gentleman
A YOUNG HOUSEMAID
A SCHOOLBOY

ALONG THE QUAYS

A July Sunday. The collector is in the act of browsing among the boxes of old Pezou, who conducts his business on the quay near the Bridge of the Holy Fathers. The old fellow, perched on a camp-stool, is smoking his pipe.

COLLECTOR (*holding up a volume at some little distance from Pezou*). How much for that?

PEZOU. Oh, it's you, sir, is it, back again? A very good morning to you!

COLLECTOR. Back again, Gaffer Pezou. Good morning.

PEZOU. Even Sunday?

COLLECTOR. Particularly Sunday.

PEZOU. You haven't gone out of town, then, like all the rest?

COLLECTOR. No, Gaffer Pezou. I don't go till August. (*Coming back to the question of his book*) How much for that?

PEZOU. That? (*Takes the volume*) Let's see. (*Opens it and reads the title*) "*Antiquatum Romanorum. Libri decem a Johanne Rosino Bartholomoei Ludduni porta.*"

COLLECTOR (*who is getting impatient*). You needn't recite it all.

PEZOU (*very calm*). It is a nice copy. (*Turns the leaves as if he were a purchaser*) There are some good woodcuts.

COLLECTOR. I admit that. Gaffer Pezou, you make me tired. You always make the greatest to-do over every book I ask you the price of. How much is it?

PEZOU. Where did you get it from?

COLLECTOR. There in the box not marked.

PEZOU. The box of best ones? Then it 's four francs.

COLLECTOR (*who has been getting his money out*). Here's three.

PEZOU. You aren't reasonable. Call it three-fifty.

COLLECTOR. Well, there you are. You always get your way. Gaffer Pezou, I may set you by the ears, but I like you well.

PEZOU. Me too, sir. I like all my customers for that matter. And heaven knows I've got a few.

COLLECTOR. So you're getting rich, are you?

PEZOU. Hardly that.

COLLECTOR. Why not?

PEZOU. Because this isn't the place to get rich. Along the quay we're satisfied to make a living. It's the big merchants, in the Arcades, that get rich. The rest of us —

COLLECTOR. Come now, don't grumble!

PEZOU. Oh, I'm not grumbling. I'm quite satisfied as I am.

COLLECTOR. That's right. You manage to be fairly happy, after all, don't you?

PEZOU. Yes. But that's natural to me. I've always had a little something of the — what would you call it? — artist and poet in me.

COLLECTOR. Really now?

PEZOU. I daresay I surprise you?

COLLECTOR. Not in the least.

PEZOU. It would be because on account of the books. As M. Marmier used to say: "Handling books all the time teaches you."

COLLECTOR. Why, that's so, Gaffer Pezou.

PEZOU. I may not be anybody but old Pezou, with my seventy-one years and my camp-chair, but I have many a little good time of my own, I can tell you. Here I sit, three quarters of a year, hours on end, thinking and watching the time pass — men and seasons go by. It's often made me wish for a dog. One feels more or less like a shepherd, with the books for flock. A little more and I'd take to knitting, when time drags. You'll be thinking me clean daft?

COLLECTOR. Quite the reverse, Gaffer Pezou. You have a fine choice of words.

PEZOU. I've no fine choice of words, but I feel what I'm talking about. Yes, when it's all blue up there, and the sky is all swept clear, why, I never get tired of watching the river and the boats go by. We folk get attached to the river like sailors to the sea, and there are even some of us who have gone out of business late in life, who yet come on fine Sundays, to sit here, as in the days when they had their ten metres of quay. They have a craving for the Seine, for the cries of the bathers, the whistle of the tug-boats, and the barking of dogs that are being washed, and of the wind in the branches of the big trees which stand with their feet in the water. That's their life.

COLLECTOR. I can understand that.

PEZOU. Autumn is very nice here too, do you know? When evening comes the water is violet. And at dusk, as we're closing up our boxes full of dead leaves, there is always the same ray from the sinking sun setting fire to the Saint James Tower.

A YOUNG HOUSEMAID (*holding out a book*). What do you ask for this, sir?

PEZOU (*reading*). "The Language of Flowers." Five cents. Call it four for you, little Miss.

[*She pays and goes away.*

COLLECTOR. Go on, Gaffer Pezou. I like to hear you talk.

PEZOU. You don't say so? M. Marmier used to tell me the same thing.

COLLECTOR. So there you are.

PEZOU. A great chap, he was! And clever, that M. Marmier! And then what he didn't know! Now and then he would tell me his travels. He had been in the ice regions. There's nobody like him — they don't make that kind any more, and it's a shame.

COLLECTOR. How long have you been on the quay, Pezou?

PEZOU. Twenty-nine years, sir.

COLLECTOR. That's quite a term.

PEZOU. It is.

COLLECTOR. But you haven't stayed in the same place, all those twenty-nine years?

PEZOU. No, I've been up and down. But the quay is always the quay, provided only you don't go too far, so as to get out of the zone.

A SCHOOLBOY (*holding out a book*). How much?

PEZOU (*takes it and reads*). "The Woman of Fire." One franc, fifty, young gentleman.

SCHOOLBOY. Here. (*A pause*) Could you wrap it up for me?

PEZOU. Why, sure. (*Meaningly*) It will be much better wrapped. (*He does it up.— To the collector*) Shall I tell you something, sir?

COLLECTOR. Say away.

PEZOU. Well then! The very finest thing in all Paris — is not the markets, not the Madeleine, not the Gambetta Monument, nor all the rest of it, — no sir, it's the quays, and the quays of the left bank first of all. Don't you agree?

COLLECTOR. Possibly. The quays are all right.

PEZOU (*getting worked-up*). But, my dear friend, there's something so amazing about them — eh? that no words can describe them. Only think! Quays. Doesn't the mere word call up the most distant parts, all the past things we see only in pictures. The quays! They stir me much more than the Arc de Triomphe or the Opéra.

COLLECTOR. You're right, there.

PEZOU. All these old balustrades where ice forms in Winter, where the sun lies in Summer, so old that they're almost like the history of France in stone — I can't help dreaming about those that leaned over them, or sat swinging their feet, in the old days, before we came here with our cases. Maybe some of those very ones who wrote all these calf-volumes that we have for sale. And then, just look across — all that magnificent stretch! The Louvre, the Tuileries — the statues, that's a great feature.

COLLECTOR. Really, I envy you, Pezou, and I should n't mind being in your place. I suppose all the quay venders are lucky fellows.

PEZOU. Well, there 's suffering too, you know. For instance, we have in the business an old lady nearly eighty. She had a good stand near the Institute — she failed to renew her license in time, or something like that. Anyway, she lost her place, and had to go a thousand miles off.

COLLECTOR. Where did she go?

PEZOU. Oh, down toward the Registry of Deeds, or the ruins of Palmyra — Well, it is n't the same thing at all, sir. Once in a while she sells a "Key to Dreams", or a "Little Rollo", and as for Sundays! When, even on week-days, she has n't fine enough stuff for the well-to-do customers.

COLLECTOR. Then Sunday is not a good day?

PEZOU. Not so bad. But not equal to week-days. On Sundays, we get chiefly students, shop employees and servants, with a few priests. Howsomever, 't won't do to be ungrateful — in March and April there are some jolly good Sundays. A fortnight after the Grand Prix, not a soul. Only foreigners and country people!

COLLECTOR. Don't they buy?

PEZOU. More or less.

COLLECTOR. Do you ever have a book stolen?

PEZOU. No, it would n't be worth while. And besides, book collectors are so correct always. They 're not your lady-killers: quite the best sort of people. Still, we don't leave them alone. No need of putting temptation in their way.

COLLECTOR. Then, you awful Pezou, you are watching me?

PEZOU. To be sure, but not for that reason. I like to for another reason.

COLLECTOR. Pray why?

PEZOU. Promise me not to take offense?

COLLECTOR. At you? Never.

PEZOU. Well, I always watch you and keep an eye on you collectors, no matter how many of you there are, because

your little ruses put me into good humor — you have simply no idea how much they amuse me.

COLLECTOR. Oh, nonsense!

PEZOU. Really. But if we enjoy it, you get still more out of it. I 'm watching you out of the corner of my eye all the time. Gracious! What frauds you are, all of you, everyone. When you find something, whether it's what you were looking for or something that you stumble on by chance, first your whole face expresses your joy, in harmony. A flash goes from eyes to mouth — and then it goes out, and you make-believe dead. You toy with the article, you flutter the leaves, you put it back, as if you had no more interest in it, so as not to call my attention to it, you go off to look at others, then you come back to it, you pick it up again gingerly, making a face, or pursing your mouth, you blow the dust off — you are quite disgusted — You examine it thoroughly, in all the corners, to see if it is all complete: paging, title-page, copyright, etc., and then the way you very slowly, very blankly turn around to me, in the most indifferent manner, as if you were thinking: "Oh, it's nothing wonderful — merely to oblige you." And you hold out the volume in the tips of your fingers: "How much, please?" If it's six francs, you offer one. We agree on one-and-fifty. And off you go. Isn't that the way, sir? Isn't it?

COLLECTOR. Gaffer Pezou, you are a terror. I 'm hurt.

PEZOU. Oh, come now, you are n't?

COLLECTOR. Yes, I am. As a proof, I 'm going.

PEZOU. That doesn't worry me. You 'll come back.

COLLECTOR. That remains to be seen.

PEZOU. Well, if you are really going, don't you want to do something that would be very nice — not that I have any right to suggest —

COLLECTOR. What is it?

PEZOU. On your way back, just go through the ruins of Palmyra — Our little old lady — you 'll recognize her. She has a cane on account of one leg being short. So just

buy something of her, anything at all — a "Parisian Cook-book", or a "Complete Letter-writer." That will be her Sunday trade. She can buy some milk. Poor little old woman!

COLLECTOR. Done!

CURTAIN

FOR EVER AND EVER

Characters

JACQUES, twenty years old
LUCIE, nineteen years old

FOR EVER AND EVER

In a wood outside Paris; after sundown.

JACQUES. Oh, my dearest dear!

LUCIE. Darling.

JACQUES. I 'm so happy, you can't begin to imagine how happy I am!

LUCIE. Not any more than I am.

JACQUES. I feel as if I had known you from a child.

LUCIE. And I — as if I had always known you. While really it 's only two weeks.

JACQUES. Time 's got nothing to do with it. I love you, and that 's the end of it. I shall never love any woman but you.

LUCIE. Really and truly?

JACQUES. Oh, yes! On my oath! I — what shall I swear by?

LUCIE. Nothing at all. Just kiss me.

JACQUES. You kiss me first.

LUCIE. And after that, you me. Twice then?

JACQUES. Ten times. Twenty. A hundred.

LUCIE. A thousand. Hear the little bird. [*They listen.*

JACQUES. Yes, I hear him.

LUCIE. I love him.

JACQUES. What sort of bird is it? A tom-tit?

LUCIE. I don't know, I'm sure. We don't have to. He's singing the way we 're loving, with his whole heart.

JACQUES. Where the deuce is he?

LUCIE. You won't find him. The birds that sing are never to be seen. What 's up there, behind your eyes?

JACQUES. Oh, nothing, everything — you.

LUCIE. That's just the way I feel. How can I express it? It's as if I were at all the different stages of my life at this one moment — when I was little — as I am now — and the way I shall be when I 'm old and you're not with me any more.

JACQUES. And why so, if you please?

LUCIE. Because by that time, you won't love me.

JACQUES. I shall always love you.

LUCIE. No you won't. A long while, I do hope a very long while. But —

JACQUES. Al-ways!

LUCIE. Why, even a long while's pretty nice, don't you think so?

JACQUES. So you don't believe me? You think I'm a liar?

LUCIE. Oh, my precious. I'm sure you mean what you say. I don't doubt you for a moment. You'll love me at least — ten to fifteen years. That I'm quite certain —

JACQUES. Oh, the ungrateful child. For shame!

LUCIE. Call it twenty, then.

JACQUES. No, but what do you take me for, pray, a will-o'-the-wisp?

LUCIE. Twenty whole years. Only think, my own, how long that is. However, I grant you that much. But afterwards? In twenty years I shall be thirty-nine — in case I don't die — and I should have many long years before me. What should I do then, without you? What would become of me?

JACQUES. But I shall be there, you adorable little creature, for ever and ever — to the end. I won't ever leave you, do you hear? "His lady's to death." The first evening I took you to the Bois — two weeks ago — I made that vow to you; don't you remember it?

LUCIE. Oh, yes!

JACQUES. In that little dark path —

LUCIE. How we cried!

JACQUES. And yet we were n't unhappy. Well, I intend to keep my promise.

LUCIE. But you can't. You won't be able to.

JACQUES. How so? Why not?

LUCIE. Because you — because I —

JACQUES. I guess what you're going to say — say it all.

LUCIE. We're so far apart. Your father a notary — and I just a milliner. Oh, and everything else that comes between us —

JACQUES. Nothing in the world can come between us. What is there separating us now at this minute, when I hold your hands in mine? Well, it will always be like this. Our whole life will be spent in loving each other. I have decided that, just now.

LUCIE. How will you manage that? What about your family?

JACQUES. I shan't arrange it. It will arrange itself.

LUCIE. I'm not the sort of woman to do you honor in your world.

JACQUES. My world is you; just you alone — my whole world.

LUCIE. I earn very, very little.

JACQUES. I'll earn for both.

LUCIE. What doing?

JACQUES. I don't know. I'll be a journalist.

LUCIE. There are so many now.

JACQUES. Yes, that's just it. One more won't be noticed. But don't let's talk about that any more. I'm not in any straits. Oh! how simple life is when there are two to live it.

LUCIE. Yes, isn't it?

JACQUES. I can't understand people's finding fault with life. Why, as long as I have you, everything else is totally indifferent. I'd think nothing of sleeping under bridges. I'd even go to South Africa —

LUCIE. So would I, gladly. But all the same, I'm just a bit worried.

JACQUES. You don't need to be. Don't you see that I've thought of everything?

LUCIE. I suppose you have.

JACQUES. I'll work with my hands, if necessary. I'm young and strong. Bah! no, the future doesn't frighten me. Kiss me!

LUCIE. The future. It does frighten me.

JACQUES. What about it? The word? The thing itself?

LUCIE. Both, dearest. The future is something we don't know, something that is there, behind the door — one can't escape it; it is laid out ahead. The future sounds to me sad — like another word for sorrow.

JACQUES. Come now, cheer up! Be jolly! No sense in being otherwise. Is life sad at our age, I should like to know?

LUCIE. We shan't always be this age.

JACQUES. Yes, we shall. It's only people who are not in love that grow old.

LUCIE. You're dear. You say things in such a sweet way, you make me want to cry.

JACQUES. I don't want you ever to cry again.

LUCIE. What do you want, then?

JACQUES. I don't want you to think of anything; I want you to let yourself float off on the current of life in my arms, with your eyes closed, as if you were in waking dream, in some skiff, on a ribbon of water.

LUCIE. I love to go boating like that. Shall we go?

JACQUES. Yes, on beautiful rivers that have windings, all shadows and mysteries, with very old trees dipping their —

LUCIE. Like scenery at the play, is n't it? And then shall we go on lakes, too?

JACQUES. Yes, Scotch Lakes, Italian Lakes — all the lakes you please.

LUCIE. Especially lakes where there is a moon.

JACQUES. Oh, of course.

LUCIE. Oh, you darling.

JACQUES. Lucie, Lucette, little dazzler! [*Kisses her.*

LUCIE. Why do you call me little?

JACQUES. No reason. I'm so happy I'm living centuries at a time.

LUCIE. Me too. It's as if it weren't me any more; as if I had said good-by to hats; as if I were never going to stir from this spot — never even eat or drink again. So this is what love is?

JACQUES. Just this, they say —

LUCIE. And yet, I've read in novels — that it makes you suffer — that people weep for love and even die for it.

JACQUES. How ridiculous!

LUCIE. Then the novels are mistaken?

JACQUES. Why, yes. They don't know anything about it. [*The night has come on.*

LUCIE. Darling, I love to think about the little room we shall have — with hangings on the wall — our own room, when the time comes so that we shan't have to part at midnight. When shall that be?

JACQUES. I don't know. Soon, perhaps.

LUCIE. Yes, but aren't you afraid that —

JACQUES. Everything will be all right. Don't you worry. Everything is all right.

LUCIE. I wish I were just a few years older.

JACQUES. What for?

LUCIE. To be more certain.

JACQUES. Little wretch. What do you need of more certainty? You have my word, my vow, my kisses. I'm not like the others. If I once give myself, it's forever and ever. Not so with you?

LUCIE. Oh, yes — for more than eternity. After that, even.

JACQUES. Well then! Since we have given ourselves to each other for so long, so long — what should we be afraid of? Nothing! Nothing! It's done.

LUCIE. Yes, I daresay — only —

JACQUES. Only what?

LUCIE. Nevertheless —

JACQUES. Well, what else?

LUCIE. It all seems too beautiful — impossibly so. At times when I think of it —

JACQUES. Don't think of it. You think too much. Kiss me. Let me hold your hands. Look at me as if you saw me in spite of the darkness — so, I can feel your eyes on mine. There! Now talk not too fast. Say my name quite low. Or rather, don't say anything! Let's be perfectly still, together. Want to?

LUCIE. Yes.

JACQUES. There's not a sound to be heard.

LUCIE. Nothing.

JACQUES. Is that white place over there made by a star?

LUCIE. Yes.

JACQUES (*suddenly getting up in a distracted manner*). Oh, Lucie! My Lucie! My Lucie!

LUCIE. What's the matter?

JACQUES. I love you. Don't you see? I love you.

LUCIE. I love you, Jacques, still more. If you were blind or a cripple, I'd love you just the same.

JACQUES. Listen, dearest. Suppose we go off together? To-morrow?

LUCIE. How do you mean?

JACQUES. Will you? Leave your old shop —

LUCIE. But what about you? And your people?

JACQUES. I'll leave a letter for them. We can write to them from abroad.

LUCIE. O-o! Should we go as far as that?

JACQUES. Yes. I'll tell you the whole story; I've eight hundred francs.

LUCIE. Eight hundred francs! Why, then we are rich?

JACQUES. Yes. If we take good care of it. That will give us a year at least. Living is cheaper abroad than in Paris. I'll have time to turn around. Will you? Say the word. I'm mad for you. I adore you so. I wish there were no one else on earth but us two.

LUCIE. Be calm, sweetheart, I beseech you. Listen! I'll do it.

JACQUES (*at the highest pitch of joy*). Oh, bless you! Thank you!

LUCIE. But not just yet, not to-morrow. A little later.

JACQUES (*dismayed*). Oh!

LUCIE. No. I'm not sure — I'm afraid we may be doing something wrong — a little imprudent — that we might regret. Let's wait a bit — till next Sunday, say.

JACQUES. Very well. We'll wait till next Sunday. But you love me?

LUCIE. Oh! Do I love you?

JACQUES. With all your heart?

LUCIE. With all —

JACQUES. Come, then.

LUCIE. Be careful.

JACQUES. There's no one here.

CURTAIN

WHERE SHALL WE GO?

Characters

M. Devain
Mme. Devain
Germaine, twenty
Jeanne, seventeen
Louise, fifteen
Agatha, thirteen
Blanche, eleven

WHERE SHALL WE GO?

One o'clock in the afternoon. M. and Mme. Devain are in their room alone. On the wide bed are five pink girlish-looking hats.

M. DEVAIN. What are you going to do with the little girls, this afternoon?

MME. DEVAIN. I wish I knew. Sunday is a very difficult day.

M. DEVAIN. Heavens! In Paris, surely there ought to be enough —

MME. DEVAIN. It's not easy to find the right thing.

M. DEVAIN. You must go out with them.

MME. DEVAIN. Certainly I must. But where?

M. DEVAIN. Oh, it doesn't matter where. They need to get some air. They don't have half enough exercise.

MME. DEVAIN. Tell me, my dear —

M. DEVAIN. What shall I tell you, old lady?

MME. DEVAIN. I suppose you wouldn't come with us?

M. DEVAIN. Out of the question. I've got to work. That's the way my Sunday has to be spent, poor old me! old donkey! while you, now, go chasing about the streets.

MME. DEVAIN (*shaking her head resignedly*). Oh, father!

M. DEVAIN (*persisting*). You do, you know you do. Well, this will never do for me. I must shut myself up in my study. (*At the door, looking back*) Well, go on, take them there — they will enjoy it.

MME. DEVAIN. Take them where? Nothing was mentioned.

M. DEVAIN (*feigning surprise*). Where? Oh, never mind where, just go. Find something anyway. Where are the pussies at the present moment?

MME. DEVAIN. At one o'clock mass with Martha. I had them wear their everyday hats. I don't want them to get in the habit of rigging up for church.

M. DEVAIN. As soon as they come in, tell Martha I won't see anyone. And then, you'd better get started at once, to take advantage of this sunshine, for by four o'clock it begins to get cool, and you know how sensitive Blanche's throat —

MME. DEVAIN. Don't you worry.

[*The door is opened.*

M. DEVAIN. Well, I declare, if here are n't the chickabiddies now.

[*The daughters enter, single file, all five very much alike. Germaine is n't pretty, but she looks full of commonsense. Jeanne is as pretty as a flower. Louise is blond and vivacious, Agatha dark and languid. Blanche has plump cheeks and is given to making faces. All carry prayer-books and wear neat kid gloves.*

M. DEVAIN. Well, children? So you're going out with your mama; are n't you delighted?

JEANNE. Where are we going?

M. DEVAIN (*mysteriously*). You'll know later. Goodness, is that all mine — that string of girls? It can't be — too many of 'em. Must sell some of 'em.

LOUISE. No, daddy, no — not too many. No, daddikins. no.

AGATHA. There are n't enough of us.

LOUISE. That's right. I wish there were twenty of us. Twenty Miss Devains!

M. DEVAIN. Oh, my stars and garters! (*To his wife*) Just listen to them!

LOUISE. The more children there are —

M. DEVAIN. The less you hear Papa laugh.

AGATHA (*to her father*). Do you know what you'd do, if you were very, very, *very* — very nice?

M. DEVAIN. What should I do?

AGATHA. You'd come along with us.

BLANCHE. Oh, yes!

LOUISE. You're such fun.

BLANCHE. You keep us laughing.

M. DEVAIN. Can't be done, pussy-cats mine.

BLANCHE. Oh, you're not one bit nice.

M. DEVAIN. Mama will take my place.

AGATHA. It's not at all the same. Mother is just mother: she's always serious and correct, but you fool and jolly us along.

M. DEVAIN. How dare you?

LOUISE. You don't think anything of taking a carriage, when you're out with us. But now, with that worthy mother of ours, we invariably have to go in the omnibus and get transfers. Anyway, you're a lot funnier. (*To Madame Devain*) You don't mind our talking this way, do you?

MME. DEVAIN. Not at all, my love.

AGATHA (*to her father*). You'll come with us next Sunday, anyway, won't you?

M. DEVAIN. Some other Sunday, yes. I promise you.

JEANNE. You've been saying that for the past year. And then, every Sunday you work away at those books —

AGATHA. Just what is your to-day's job?

M. DEVAIN. My to-day's job? It's too stiff for you — you'd never understand it.

AGATHA. Never mind, tell Germaine what it is. She'll understand it, you can bet on her.

M. DEVAIN. Well, it is an "Account of the taxes on real-property and bonds in 1788." Will that do you?

BLANCHE. Well, upon my word, that sounds exciting!

M. DEVAIN. It's desperately so. But don't lose any more time. Get ready. Skidaddle!

AGATHA. Which hats are we to wear?

BLANCHE. The pink ones.

GERMAINE. Our best ones? We ought to save those.

M. DEVAIN. No, indeed, put on the pink ones. I want my daughters to go in style, so that everyone will turn around to look at them.

JEANNE. All this does n't tell us where we are bound for.

M. DEVAIN. Ask your mother.

LOUISE. Mother!

AGATHA. Mamma!

BLANCHE. Mummikins!

GERMAINE. Well — ?

MME. DEVAIN (*very uncomfortable*). Why, we 're going — we 're going. Don't all speak at once. We 're going — (*to her husband*) Help us, won 't you, Father, before you leave us?

M. DEVAIN. Must I? It 's funny you can't decide on that for yourself. Try a little.

MME. DEVAIN. Think up something, dear, can't you?

BLANCHE. Yes, rack your brains, my precious papa!

M. DEVAIN. Take them to the new Circus.

BLANCHE. Oh, yes, goody! Chocolates!

JEANNE. Well, I must confess I 'm not keen for that.

MME. DEVAIN. How about the rest of you?

LOUISE. We 've been there twice already this year. It 's always the same thing.

AGATHA. Same old horses —

M. DEVAIN. Well, you could n't expect song-birds, could you? [*The children laugh.*

MME. DEVAIN. And besides, when you reckon up six persons, it counts up right off.

M. DEVAIN. Very well, the Circus is vetoed. Take them to the Park —

MME. DEVAIN. On Sunday? Why, you can't get about at all — the wheels, the motors, and dust —

M. DEVAIN. Why not to the Pré Catalan?

BLANCHE. Well, for one thing, I don't like milk. It always gives me the stomach-ache.

MME. DEVAIN. And then, it 's a long way off. There are never any seats in the street-cars, and if you have two cabs — one to go out and one to come back — with tea — all that means quite an expense.

M. DEVAIN (*ruffled*). Well, there you are. Don't you see

that it 's no use my suggesting anything? I dig up one thing after another and you refuse each one systematically.

MME. DEVAIN. Oh, no, dear, not quite that, but —

M. DEVAIN. If that 's how you feel, just go and jolly well take seats on the Champs-Elysées.

JEANNE (*gloomily*). And watch the driving?

LOUISE (*excitedly*). Oh, yes, the turnouts! The lovely ladies inside, all painted, and with sunshades of pretty colors!

MME. DEVAIN (*to her husband*). Hear that? Hear that? I meant to speak to you about it. We went there a fortnight ago and sat down. Louise came back mad about it. I don't mind her hearing me say so. It 's got into her brain; she is like all women; all she thinks of is the fascination of hats, dresses, jewels. She gets into a state of excitement that is very bad — and it worries me!

AGATHA (*to her mother*). You ought n't scold her, she 's so sweet.

MME. DEVAIN. I 'm not scolding her. But she is altogether too vain.

M. DEVAIN. Come now, listen to me. I 'm sure I don't know what to do with these good-for-nothing young ones. Take them to Siberia or the Punch-and-Judy, anywhere you like.

[*The children laugh.*

AGATHA. That 's a good joke!

BLANCHE. It 's things like that that make us have such a good time with you.

GERMAINE (*seriously*). See here! Suppose we go to the Ice Palace.

LOUISE. Yes!

JEANNE. Oh, yes! I should so love to learn to skate. It 's so chic.

MME. DEVAIN. A dollar a person just to get in, my dear child, which is not quite so chic. We haven't the means to spend six dollars on one Sunday afternoon's pleasure.

JEANNE. It 's a shame.

M. DEVAIN (*tentatively*). How about going somewhere to listen to music?

JEANNE. A three-hour concert? Indoors? Louise and I both loathe music.

LOUISE. Oh, I 'd go to sleep.

GERMAINE. And you snore, you know.

M. DEVAIN. The Grévin Museum.

BLANCHE. I 'm afraid to go there. I 'd dream about robbers.

M. DEVAIN (*getting warmed up*). The Military Band in the Tuileries?

MME. DEVAIN. Don't you remember Louise and Jeanne loathe —

M. DEVAIN (*to those two*). Even a brass band?

LOUISE. Even that, papa dear.

BLANCHE. I 've an idea. What about going up to the Arcade Triomphe?

AGATHA. Yes. To see the people look like ants.

MME. DEVAIN. Oh, no, I guess not. I confess that my legs, little girls —

BLANCHE. You can wait for us down below, talking with the janitor.

MME. DEVAIN. Oh, I shouldn't survive that. I might as well go up.

M. DEVAIN. I don't wish your mother to get all worn-out. (*Change of tone*) Well, well, can't anyone think of anything? It can't be so very hard. For mercy's sake —

MME. DEVAIN. Oh, if I had only myself to consider, I should not be at all puzzled, you may be sure —

M. DEVAIN. What then? What should you do?

MME. DEVAIN. I should go to Vespers and Benediction.

JEANNE (*anxiously*). Oh, Mother Darling!

MME. DEVAIN. You need not fear I shall inflict it on you. I just say it to show you that I am giving up something for you.

JEANNE. You are the best ever —

LOUISE. Do you know how all this will end? I 'll inform you: we shan't get out at all. Someone will say, "Well, it 's hardly worth while, now is it? It 's quite late. The best part of the day is gone", and so on — and so forth — on the other foot.

MME. DEVAIN. Not so, little girl.

LOUISE (*violently*). I know it. (*To her sisters*) You just see!

MME. DEVAIN. But I tell you, no, dear child. We shall go out. Even if I had to —

LOUISE (*quite beside herself*). Well, meantime, here we are, all five of us, with our pink hats, like garden-images. And why? Just because we had the misfortune to be five daughters, and our parents have to think about money.

MME. DEVAIN. Why, of course they do. We must consider your father. Remember how much he does for us.

[*M. Devain shrugs his shoulders and goes to the window.*

LOUISE. Oh, yes, that's true. But if we were an only child, that one would have a much better time. Isn't that so now? And is it true or not that it 's a misfortune to be five girls, and that no one wants to marry Germaine? And that we have to go to cheap little dressmakers?

MME. DEVAIN. Be quiet, hush! That's more than enough! (*To her husband*) Father, will you make her keep still? How do I happen to have such a little virago of a daughter? (*M. Devain is looking fixedly out of the window, and does not stir*) Well, Papa, don't you hear me?

M. DEVAIN (*turns around and with a gesture of sudden relief*). Well, children, it 's begun to rain. That settles everything.

[*He goes out. Slowly and silently the pink hats come off, one by one.*

CURTAIN

THE AFTERNOON WALK

Characters

PAUL, ten years old
LOUIS, twelve years old
JOSÉ, thirteen years old
LUCIEN, fifteen years old

M. TRICHE, thirty-three years old. Inclining to stoutness, his hair is worn too long; he has the shovel-hat of a sub-master at the Lyceum

THE AFTERNOON WALK

On the quay, leading in the direction of the Trocadero, the four boys abreast, dragging their hobnailed shoes and chattering animatedly, M. Triche, their tutor, walks along behind them, gloomy and thoughtful, after the manner of keepers.

PAUL. Well, I 've got a sister who has a whole chest full of diamonds.

LOUIS. I 've got a big brother who has won every decoration there is in the whole world.

JOSÉ. Well, you know my father once met a thief in the woods. The thief passed right by him without saying a word.

LOUIS. Huh, my father killed an elephant.

JOSÉ. An elephant?

LOUIS. You bet — a whopper.

JOSÉ. Where?

LOUIS. Why, on his travels, of course.

JOSÉ. Where did your father go, on his travels?

LOUIS. Everywhere.

PAUL. Well, I 've got a castle.

JOSÉ. I'm going to have a couple later on — with cannons.

PAUL. Oh, well, my father and mother are both dead.

LUCIEN. You're everyone of you telling lies or talking nonsense.

PAUL. No, sir!

JOSÉ. Sure not.

LUCIEN. Oh, go on! Look here now. Your sister's diamonds, Paul, — Louis's elephant. Of course I know that 's all gospel truth. Isn't it now?

PAUL. Oh, well, of course, it 's a bit stretched.

JOSÉ. We were just jollying.

LOUIS. Just to feel sort of grown up.

PAUL. Telling stories is all the fun we have on Sundays.

JOSÉ. When we 're out to walk, it 's true. Somehow, the open air and all makes us make up things.

LUCIEN. Well, didn't I tell you so? And then, besides, it is a diversion. It takes the place of our families, when we don't go home.

JOSÉ. It 's disgusting, just the same, to be abandoned this way by one's parents.

LOUIS. What are you going to do about it? Can't be helped. Considering we 've got parents a long way off, who have their cakes and ale without us.

PAUL. Sure. He 's dead right. Nothing for us but to go to walk with Monsieur Triche on the Sundays that the others have leave.

JOSÉ. Our pet gorilla!

PAUL. Say, just look at him! Isn't he the ugliest ever!

LOUIS. His hat 's as greasy as a slice of bread and butter.

LUCIEN. He 's not bad-tempered.

LOUIS. That 's the only thing he isn't.

PAUL. He doesn't seem to be enjoying himself any more than we are.

JOSÉ. Maybe not, but I think he's quite hard to please. He can do what he wants, anyway. Buy a paper — or a piece of barley-candy — or smoke —

PAUL. And then he can stop in anywhere he likes.

JOSÉ. I know it. And we have to ask, just for that: "Permission, Monsieur."

LOUIS. It 's sickening. Where are your parents, you, José? Still in Brazil?

JOSÉ. Yep.

PAUL. Is it any good in Brazil?

JOSÉ. Oh, not bad.

PAUL. You 've been there.

JOSÉ. I was born there, but I don't remember anything. I was put out to nurse in France, very soon after.

LOUIS. And since then?

JOSÉ. Never budged. Papa writes me once or twice a year when he sends me money.

LOUIS. What's he doing?

JOSÉ. He earns money. And what about your mother and father? Are they far off?

LOUIS. No, they're in Paris.

JOSÉ. In Paris. But you never see them.

LOUIS. They haven't time. They work.

JOSÉ. What at?

LOUIS. Earning a living.

JOSÉ (*to Paul*). And how about yours?

LOUIS (*to Paul*). You said just now that yours were dead.

PAUL. Oh, no, stupid. Not yet.

LOUIS. What made you say so?

PAUL. Oh, just for fun.

JOSÉ. Well, what do they do?

PAUL. Earn a living.

LOUIS. They don't exactly pay you daily visits.

PAUL. No, they forget me rather, once they've dumped me here with my trunk. I don't care. When I'm a man —

JOSÉ. Well, what about you, Lucien? You've never told us how yours amuse themselves.

LUCIEN. I have none.

PAUL. What, really?

LOUIS. Nobody? Nobody at all?

LUCIEN. Nobody.

JOSÉ. Surely you have an uncle or a cousin? Some substitute exactly as good?

LUCIEN. No, only a guardian.

JOSÉ. What's that, pray tell?

LUCIEN. Why, it's a man, don't you know, whose charge you're put in — who is supposed to take the baby out to walk.

JOSÉ. And you've got one of those?

LUCIEN. That's what.

LOUIS. But he's not often seen rising from the waves.

LUCIEN. It's true. He seldom comes to see me because he's busy.

JOSÉ. Where?

LUCIEN. In the country, way off near Bordeaux.

JOSÉ. What does he do?

LUCIEN. Makes money.

LOUIS. I see. Then you have a guardian who doesn't guard.

PAUL. I call the whole thing futile piffle.

M. TRICHE. Young gentlemen, beware of the carriages. We shall cross over directly.

LOUIS. Oh, we're all right.

PAUL. I say, sir.

M. TRICHE. Well, what?

PAUL. I'd like to ask you a question.

M. TRICHE. Go ahead.

PAUL. You look as if you were jolly well bored, taking us out to walk.

M. TRICHE. I? Oh, no. I have my own thoughts.

LOUIS. What about?

M. TRICHE. Oh, you wouldn't be interested.

PAUL. Yes, we should.

JOSÉ. Sure thing, Monsieur Triche.

LOUIS. We want to hear.

M. TRICHE. Well, I think about my parents whom I've not seen for nine years.

LOUIS. Oh, really?

PAUL. Where are they?

JOSÉ. Are they far away?

M. TRICHE. Yes, a long way in the country.

PAUL. Are they farmers?

M. TRICHE. I suppose you'd call them so. The village is only a small one. I'm fond of them and they are quite old now. They don't like it that I never go home to see them.

JOSÉ. Why don't you go sometime? Off in a cloud of dust!

LUCIEN. We'll give you permission, sir.

M. TRICHE (*sighing*). Out of the question. My situation, you see. I've got to stay here.

LOUIS. What for?

M. TRICHE. To earn my living.

LUCIEN. We always run up against that.

M. TRICHE. Here now, take hold of hands. This is our chance to get across, little fellows.

CURTAIN

NOT AT HOME

Characters

DIANA DE SAINT-GOBAIN, twenty-eight years old
MADAME LECHOUX, fifty-nine years old
UNCLE ARTHUR, forty-seven years old
PRINCE POPOPOFF, rising sixty
A MAID

NOT AT HOME

It is winter time. Diana is lying on a chaise-longue before the fire of the sitting-room of her little house on the Boulevard Pereire. The basement door rings, and a maid opens the door part way.

MAID. They've come, Madame.

DIANA. Let them up. Then go. Tell Sylphide and Pauline that they are free till midnight. Romeo can go where he pleases, too. I shall not require any dinner.

MAID. Very well, Madame. Here they are.

[*She disappears. Enter Madame Lechoux and Uncle Arthur. The door is shut behind them.*

MME. LECHOUX. Hullo, girlie — girlie.

DIANA. Hullo, ma.

UNCLE ARTHUR. Good afternoon, niece.

DIANA. Aft'noon, Uncle Art. Sit down. Take off your hat, mummy. You, too, Uncle, leave your umbrella in the corner. Is it cold out?

MME. LECHOUX. Well, it's not to say hot.

UNCLE ARTHUR. My hands were fair numb this afternoon, down to the market, now I tell you.

MME. LECHOUX. It's much pleasanter here.

UNCLE ARTHUR. You've got some wood there, Diana, that knows what burning means. Makes a nice blaze, too. What do you pay for it?

DIANA. I don't know.

UNCLE ARTHUR. You don't know.

DIANA. No, indeed.

UNCLE ARTHUR. Who looks after that kind of thing for you?

DIANA. I don't really know that.

UNCLE ARTHUR. Come now, that's a bit thick.

DIANA. I believe Pauline does.

UNCLE ARTHUR. Your servant girl? Why, they probably cheat you. No doubt rob you outright.

DIANA. I should worry.

MME. LECHOUX. What do you suppose she cares? She doesn't pay the bills.

UNCLE ARTHUR. At that, money's money.

MME. LECHOUX. Oh, come, ring off. Don't be an idiot, Brother. Get warmed up, and don't ask questions.

UNCLE ARTHUR (*with a sigh*). I suppose the Prince is still in the ring?

DIANA. Sure thing.

UNCLE ARTHUR. Let's see now. What is it you call him? For the life of me I can't ever remember.

DIANA. Po.

UNCLE ARTHUR. In fun?

DIANA. Short for Popopoff.

UNCLE ARTHUR. That's right. It all comes back to me, now.

DIANA. I call him Po for short, just when we're alone.

UNCLE ARTHUR. Don't he mind?

DIANA. Oh, he loves it!

UNCLE ARTHUR. Well, if women aren't the limit.

MME. LECHOUX. What about men, then? Six of one and half-a-dozen of t'other.

UNCLE ARTHUR. True. I sometimes get to thinking, and I regret that —

DIANA. What, pray?

UNCLE ARTHUR. That I wasn't a prince — a Rooshan one, for choice. I might have been one — if Providence had permitted. Oh, well! (*A pause*) Worse luck. It would have been more sport than being a greengrocer.

DIANA. Are you people hungry?

UNCLE ARTHUR. Not yet. My appetite is on the way.

DIANA. Thirsty?

UNCLE ARTHUR. Presently, thanks.

DIANA (*to her mother*). How about you, ma? Have some refreshments?

MME. LECHOUX. No — only an hour or so later, maybe, I'll ask you for a little of that cheese we had last Sunday, if there's any left.

DIANA. None left, ma. Did you think we picked it for future use?

MME. LECHOUX. That's too bad. It certainly was good cheese. Then I'll just have a glass of cordial. But no hurry; towards night when we light up.

UNCLE ARTHUR. Now, cordials poison me. You can give me some wine, Rooshan wine, if you have any. To drink to France: (*sings*) "France is my mother, and I am her children."

DIANA. Hush! You go right through my head.

MME. LECHOUX (*to her daughter*). Well, how is everything? You happy?

DIANA. Perfectly.

MME. LECHOUX. Is he as nice as ever?

DIANA. Even nicer, if possible.

MME. LECHOUX. Does he still make you little presents?

DIANA. Little ones and big ones.

MME. LECHOUX. For instance.

DIANA. Yesterday, he gave me a ring.

UNCLE ARTHUR (*pointing at a ruby on her finger*). That boulder?

DIANA. Why, no, Uncle, you've seen this one.

MME. LECHOUX (*to Uncle Arthur*). That's the one he gave her when his wife died.

DIANA. Yesterday's is a star in sapphires. I'll show it to you presently.

MME. LECHOUX. Yes, when we're really settled. First, give us our aprons, like you always do Sundays.

UNCLE ARTHUR. Where are our aprons?

DIANA. You know, don't you? In the linen-closet. The closet at the left of the mantel.

UNCLE ARTHUR. All right. I'll go get them.

[*He leaves the room.*

MME. LECHOUX. It's fine to have a man who is generous, a spender. I'm tickled to death, lovey-dovey, that you've struck such luck.

DIANA. Yes.

MME. LECHOUX. Do you suppose you'll keep him?

DIANA. As long as I can. But that side of it doesn't interest me. I prefer not to think of it.

MME. LECHOUX. You must think of it. It is your duty. If you don't think for yourself, you ought to for your people, for your mother's sake. When one has a family, one should — you get me, little girl?

DIANA. Yes, ma.

MME. LECHOUX. If your poor father were only alive! (*A silence*) Oh, just a word. If you've anything to give me to-day, don't do it before your uncle. He 's jealous.

DIANA. Right-O.

MME. LECHOUX. Take care.

UNCLE ARTHUR (*comes in again, an apron tied around his waist*). Here I am, a regular Boots. (*He holds out the other to Mme. Lechoux*) Here's yours.

MME. LECHOUX (*putting it on and tying it. To her daughter*). Now let's see. What are you going to give us to do, precious? We like to be useful.

DIANA. Well, I don't just know.

UNCLE ARTHUR. What can we clean up for you?

DIANA. Everything is clean here.

MME. LECHOUX. Oh, oh! I guess it would n't do to look too close. I 'm quite sure that we could find some dust if we should hunt in all the corners, under the furniture.

DIANA. What would you like best to do?

MME. LECHOUX. I've no choice.

UNCLE ARTHUR. I'd like to straighten up your dressing-table.

MME. LECHOUX. Now, just listen to him, will you, the old rascal? (*To her daughter*) Would you like — would you like me to do — (*She tries to think up something*) your cut-glass?

DIANA. Not worth while.

UNCLE ARTHUR. Your saucepans?

DIANA. Thanks awfully, my *chef* certainly would let me hear from it, if he noticed that anyone had been monkeying with his tool-chest. You don't know Sir Romeo.

UNCLE ARTHUR. No, but we've eaten his cooking. He's all right. He's on to his job.

DIANA. I should say he was.

MME. LECHOUX. Should you like us to do your brasses?

UNCLE ARTHUR. No scrubbing to be done?

DIANA. You know very well that I have carpets everywhere.

UNCLE ARTHUR. Even in your —

DIANA. Why, of course. There in particular.

UNCLE ARTHUR. My eye! You're not so badly off.

MME. LECHOUX. Then it seems as if your family couldn't be of any use to you.

UNCLE ARTHUR. You haven't even a little kettle to mend with fish-glue?

DIANA. No, no. Nothing of that sort.

MME. LECHOUX. It's so nice to be here beside you, working, while you tell us little stories about your likes and dislikes, the Prince, and this one and that one. It's as good as a cordial. It is, really. My brother and I just look forward to Sunday, on my word we do.

UNCLE ARTHUR. That's right. We do that.

MME. LECHOUX. Because you're a sweet, affectionate girl, with some heart, and care a little about your mother. You ain't proud nor yet catty. There's plenty of people whose children wouldn't look at them nor associate with them at all in your place, and, considering the position you hold, saying they owe it to society. You're different. You never blush to see us in your fine apartment —

UNCLE ARTHUR. She knows, too, that we are all proud of her.

MME. LECHOUX. Of course, we are. (*To Diana*) There's no one like you. I must kiss you just for fun. [*Kisses her.*

UNCLE ARTHUR. Well, don't I get one too? [*Kisses her in his turn.*

DIANA. Want to come and look over my jewel-box?

UNCLE ARTHUR. Oh, yes!

DIANA. But you know them by heart, already.

MME. LECHOUX. That doesn't hurt anything. They always seem new.

UNCLE ARTHUR. Jewels are things you don't tire of. And besides, you always think to yourself how much they are worth, how many vegetables they'd buy.

MME. LECHOUX. It all amounts to quite a fortune.

DIANA. Rather.

MME. LECHOUX. Well, show them to us, with their stories. Who this came from; how you got each piece; all the gentlemen's names; how much you could pawn them for. Everything, in fact.

DIANA. What a child it is, poor little motherkins!

MME. LECHOUX. Then, after that, I'll lay out the cards. Sundays they tell more than other days. Yes, that's their day.

DIANA. Well, set out the table, while I go to my room to get my case.

MME. LECHOUX. All right. That'll be fine. Bring your little soft brush along. [*At this moment a doorbell rings.*

UNCLE ARTHUR. There's the doorbell.

DIANA. Go see, ma, will you?

MME. LECHOUX. Isn't there anyone to wait on the door?

DIANA. Why, no. You know very well that I ship the whole bunch on Sundays so we can be all the cosier by ourselves, like one family.

MME. LECHOUX. That's so, of course. When just think of all the hussies there are who would go to the races if they were in your place — such a love as she is — you know you are just a pearl. [*Kisses her. The ring is repeated.*

DIANA. Hustle, Mother, and you understand I'm at home to nobody, positively nobody.

MME. LECHOUX. I'll skip. [*She goes out and down stairs. Diana goes in to the next room.*

[*Uncle Arthur, left alone, looks around at his ease, but sees nothing he can very well take without being observed. He gives a sigh at finding nothing. However, he slips into his pocket a red pencil and three Russian cigarettes which were lying in a saucer. Just at that moment a sound of voices is heard. An old man, with cheeks reddened artificially, and cotton wool side-whiskers, appears, ushered in by Mme. Lechoux, who is overcome with deference.*

MME. LECHOUX (*impressed, to her daughter*). It was the Prince. He told me his name, so I —

DIANA (*in a rage — from the piano*). You? Po?

POPOPOFF. Yes, dear child. Pray, who is this lady in the apron, who wishes to kiss the skin off my hands?

DIANA. She's my mother. I must say you've got a nerve, coming on Sunday, when I've forbidden you. Sundays I'm not at home to a soul — not even to the tip of your nose. I've told you often enough, I should hope.

MME. LECHOUX. Girlie! Girlie!

DIANA. You keep still, ma.

UNCLE ARTHUR (*to the Prince*). Don't mind her.

POPOPOFF (*to Diana, pointing to Uncle Arthur*). Your father, Diana?

DIANA. My son, if you like. It's nothing to you. You heard what I said. Make a noise like a hoop and roll away. In the week, you know, my dear Bruin, the whole blooming week is yours. But on Sunday — nothing doing. That's the family's day, as sacred as an ikon. So, in closing, the Russian hymn and flap your wings —

POPOPOFF (*ultra-correct*). Cruel, too cruel, fair one. Madame, Monsieur, I have the honor — [*Bows and goes off. A silence. Tip-tap of patent-leathers on the stairs. The door bangs.*

UNCLE ARTHUR. Now, what do you know? You're crazy.

MME. LECHOUX. How you did talk to him.

UNCLE ARTHUR. He'll never come back.

DIANA. Don't you worry. He'll be prostrate on my doormat the first thing to-morrow morning.

UNCLE ARTHUR. He certainly speaks up like a gentleman! And he 's a fine shape. He 'd made a wonder of a greengrocer.

DIANA. You 'd better propose it to him. (*To her mother, who has begun to spread out the cards in rows on the table*) Are you going to tell my fortune?

MME. LECHOUX. I want to see if he will die in your arms.

CURTAIN

FRANÇOISE' LUCK

GEORGES DE PORTO-RICHE

(1849–)

Georges de Porto-Riche was born at Bordeaux in 1849. He was of Italian extraction, and his father was in the shipping business. He was endowed with a melancholy disposition, very evident in his early volumes of verse. "My first happy memory," he says, "was that of a woman." And one might regard this as a prophetic indication of the main interest in his plays, where, with the frankness and sincerity of an artist, he depicts love incidents at which even Parisian audiences were shocked, but which, as a distinctive treatment of the "slice of life" drama, contain frank statements of equally frank situations; because of the directness with which they are treated, they are telling in their moral quality and their challenge.

From college he went into the house of a banker, and began the reading of law. But he continued his love of writing, in which craft he was not discouraged, because his father had a curious belief that writing carried with it certain social prestige. A strange mixture of morbidity, of sensuality, and political fervor marked his verse; for the latter sentiments, with the enthusiasm of a young man for Gambetta and the worship of a young artist for Victor Hugo, he was thrice imprisoned at Lyon, under the Commune. But he came out none the worse for wear, ready to take a position as Secretary to Jules Janin, to confide some of his poems to the scrutiny of Leandre Sardou, father of the playwright, and to write a manuscript on Rabelais, which he promptly lost. He

traveled in Italy, where, at Nice, he met Renan, returned to Paris, and became a friend of Guy de Maupassant. Between 1872 and 1878 he wrote "Prima Verba", "Pomme d'Eve", and "Tout n'est pas Rose" and, after some negotiations, succeeded in having produced, at the Odéon, "Le Vertige" (1873), "Un drame sous Philipp II" (1875), "Les Deux Fautes" (1878), and "Don Juan", the latter being an adaptation of Shadwell, done in collaboration with Louis Legendre.

Married life did not go well with Porto-Riche; he much preferred his friendship with Guy de Maupassant to those practical considerations which level quotidian happenings. His biographer says that as external events are valued, his life was scarcely eventful; he went about among his Bohemian friends, resembling some seigneur painted by Van Dyke.

The Odéon did not always give Porto-Riche the encouragement at first accorded him by that institution. The management refused "La Chance de Françoise", as they did "L'Infidèle", "Calice", and "Comte Marcelli." But they had occasion to regret their decision regarding "Françoise' Luck." This play was written during 1883, and was not produced until 1888, at the Menus-Plaisirs. It was scarcely in the style of the Théâtre-Libre, but, notwithstanding, Antoine gave it, and acted in it with Mayer and Sigall. It at first bore the name, "Marié." As measure of the influence the Théâtre-Libre had on the other playhouses of Paris, two months after Porto-Riche's great success with the piece, it was seen at the Gymnase, only to pass, on December 15, 1891, to the Théâtre Français, where it was interpreted by Bargy and Falconnier.

"L'Infidèle", refused by Réjane, was a stage triumph when Bodinier produced it at the Théâtre d'Application, April 19, 1890. Its plot was disagreeable, its theme challenged the censor; yet the *Écho de Paris* published the text the day after, and later it was to be seen at the Vaudeville, the Varieties, and the Renaissance. But perhaps the greatest of Porto-Riche's successes was when "Amoureuse" (once called

"L'Ennerine") was given by Réjane, on April 25, 1891. Accounts assert that the opening was a regular Parisian first night. The play had been ordered by the famous comédienne before one word had been put to paper; it had been worked out in little over three months — in fact, between the time it was ordered and produced was less than four months — while the last act was composed by Porto-Riche at the deathbed of his father.

After this, somehow, there came a reaction against Porto-Riche. "Le Passé" did not fare so well as its predecessor, though it was eventually given, on December 30, 1897. "Malefilâtre", a two-act drama, was accepted by the Renaissance for production, April, 1904. But, thereafter, Porto-Riche was a slow worker, and "Le Vieil Homme" was not completed for thirteen years (1911). In the meantime, the Government had given him, in 1906, the official post of custodian of the Bibliothèque Mazarine, where his duties were not so exacting as to prevent his continuing slowly with his writing. Barring his appearance at the Comédie Royale with a fugitive piece, called "Zubiri", taken from Hugo's "Choses Vues", Porto-Riche has ceased to be the active figure Donnay and others have become.

WORKS

Le Vertige. (1 act) 1873.
Un Drame sous Philipp II. 1875.
Les Deux Fautes. (1 act) 1879.
Vanina. (2 tableaux) 1879.
La Chance de Françoise. (1 act) 1889. Translated by Barrett H. Clark, in "Four Plays of the Free Theater." Also in Shay's "Fifty Contemporary One-Act Plays." Stewart Kidd & Company, Cincinnati.
L'Infidèle. (1 act) 1890.
Amoureuse. 1891. Translated by J. P. W. Crawford. See T. H. Dickinson, "Chief Contemporary Dramatists." Series II. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.
Le Passé. 1898.

Les Malefilâtre. (2 acts) 1904.
Le Vieil Homme. 1911.
Zubiri (from Victor Hugo). (1 act) 1912. Comédie Royale, February 1, 1912.
Le marchand d'estampes. 1918.

See also Porto-Riche's "Don Juan" (drawn from Shadwell, and written with L. Lefevre). Also "Béruria", in his "Saynètes et monologues", 1882. His plays have been gathered together as "Théâtre d'Amour."

FRANÇOISE' LUCK

(*La Chance de Françoise*)

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

BY GEORGES DE PORTO-RICHE

TRANSLATED BY

BARRETT H. CLARK

Presented for the first time, in Paris, at the Théâtre-Libre, December 10, 1888.

Characters

MARCEL DESROCHES
GUÉRIN
JEAN
FRANÇOISE
MADELEINE

The scene is Auteuil. The time is the present.

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FRANÇOISE' LUCK

A studio. At the back is a door opening upon a garden; doors to the right and left; also a small, inconspicuous door to the left. There are a few pictures on easels. The table is littered with papers, books, weapons, bric-à-brac, here and there; chairs and sofas. It is eleven o'clock in the morning.

FRANÇOISE (*a small woman, frail, with a melancholy look, at times rather mocking. As the curtain rises she is alone. She raises and lowers the window-blind from time to time*). A little more! There! Oh, the sunlight! How blinding! (*Glancing at the studio with an air of satisfaction*) How neat everything is! (*In attempting to take something from the table, she knocks some papers to the floor*) Well! (*Seeing a letter among the papers which she is picking up*) A letter! From M. Guérin — (*Reading*) "My dear friend, why do you persist in keeping silence? You say very little of the imprudent woman who has dared to become the companion of the handsome Marcel! Do you recompense her for her confidence in you, for her courage? You are not at all like other men: your frivolity, if you will permit the term, your —" (*Interrupting herself*) He writes the word! (*Continuing*) "Your cynicism makes me tremble for you. Absent for a year! How much friendship is gone to waste! Why were we thrust apart the moment you were married? Why did my wife's health make sunlight an absolute necessity for her? We are now leaving Rome; in a month I'll drop in on you at Auteuil —" (*Interrupting herself again*) Very soon! (*Marcel appears at the back*) "I am very impatient to see you, and very anxious to see Madame

Desroches. I wonder whether she will take to me? I hope she will. Take care, you ruffian, I shall cross-question her carefully, and, if I find the slightest cloud in her happiness, her friend-to-be will be an angry man." (*She stops reading, and says to herself, sadly*) A friend — I should like that!

MARCEL (*carelessly dressed. He is of the type which usually appeals to women*). Ah, inquisitive, you read my letters?

FRANÇOISE. Oh, it's an old one —

MARCEL (*chaffing her*). From Guérin?

FRANÇOISE. I found it there, when I was putting the studio in order.

MARCEL (*tenderly*). The little romantic child is looking for a friend?

FRANÇOISE. I have so much to tell, so much about my recent happiness!

MARCEL. Am I not that friend?

FRANÇOISE. You are the man I love. Should I consult with you, when your happiness is at stake?

MARCEL. Too deep for me! (*Yawning*) Oh, I'm tired —!

FRANÇOISE. Did you come in late last night?

MARCEL. Three o'clock.

FRANÇOISE. You were quiet about it, you naughty man!

MARCEL. Were you jealous?

FRANÇOISE. The idea! I am morally certain that you love no one except your wife.

MARCEL (*sadly*). It's true, I love no one except my wife —

FRANÇOISE (*chaffing him in turn*). Poor Marcel!

MARCEL. I was bored to death at that supper; I can't imagine why. — They all tell me I'm getting stout.

FRANÇOISE. That's no reason why you should n't please.

MARCEL. God is very unjust.

FRANÇOISE. So they say!

MARCEL (*stretching out on a sofa*). Excuse my appearance, won't you, Françoise? (*Making himself comfortable*) I can't keep my eyes open any longer nowadays — The days of my youth — Why, I was — [*He stops.*

FRANÇOISE. You were just the right age for marriage.

MARCEL (*as if to banish the idea*). Oh! (*A pause*) I'm sure you will get along well with Guérin. Yours are kindred spirits — you're alike — not in looks, however.

FRANÇOISE. Morally, you mean?

MARCEL. Yes — I'm flattering him by the comparison.

FRANÇOISE. He's like this, then: sentimental, a good friend, and an honest man. Yes, I think I shall get along nicely with him.

MARCEL. What a sympathetic nature you have! You've never seen him, and you know him already.

FRANÇOISE. How long has he been married?

MARCEL. He was born married!

FRANÇOISE. Tell me.

MARCEL. Ten years, I think.

FRANÇOISE. He's happy?

MARCEL. Very.

FRANÇOISE. What sort of woman is she?

MARCEL. Lively.

FRANÇOISE. Though virtuous?

MARCEL. So they say.

FRANÇOISE. Then Madame Guérin and the handsome Marcel — eh?

MARCEL. A friend's wife?

FRANÇOISE. It's very tempting — (*Marcel seems to take this in bad spirit; he is about to put on his hat*) Are you going out?

MARCEL. I lunch at the club.

FRANÇOISE. Very well.

MARCEL. I 'm all — a little nervous; I need a breath of air.

FRANÇOISE. Paris air!

MARCEL. Precisely.

FRANÇOISE. And your work —?

MARCEL. I'm not in the mood.

FRANÇOISE. There 's only ten days before the Salon: you'll never be ready.

MARCEL. What chance have I, with my talent?

FRANÇOISE. You have a great deal of talent — it's recognized everywhere.

MARCEL. I did have —

[*A pause.*

FRANÇOISE. Will you be home for dinner?

MARCEL (*tenderly*). Of course! And don't let any black suspicions get the better of you: I'm not lunching with anybody!

FRANÇOISE. I suspect you!

MARCEL (*gratefully*). 'Til later, then! (*A pause. Frankly*) Of course, I don't always go where I tell you I'm going. Why should I worry you? But if you think I — do what I ought not to do, you are mistaken. I'm no longer a bachelor, you know.

FRANÇOISE. Just a trifle, aren't you?

MARCEL. No jealousy, dear! The day of adventures is dead and buried. Thirty-five mortal years, scarcity of hair, a noticeable rotundity, and married! Opportunities are fewer now!

FRANÇOISE (*playfully*). Don't lose courage, your luck may return — A minute would suffice.

MARCEL (*mournfully*). I don't dare hope.

FRANÇOISE. Married! You were never fated to be a proprietor; you are doomed to be a tenant.

MARCEL (*as he is about to leave, he sees a telegram on the table*). Oh, a telegram, and you said nothing to me about it!

FRANÇOISE. I didn't see it. Jean must have brought it while you were asleep.

MARCEL. From Passy! I know that hand! (*Aside, with surprise*) Madame Guérin — Madeleine! Well! (*Reading*) "My dear friend, I lunch to-day with my aunt, Madame de Monglat, at La Muette — as I used to. Come and see me before noon; I have serious things to talk over with you." (*He stops reading; aside, much pleased*) A rendezvous! And after three years! Poor Guérin! — No! It wouldn't be decent, now! No!

FRANÇOISE (*aside*). He seems to be waking up!

MARCEL (*aside*). They must have returned! Françoise was right — a minute would suffice! The dear girl!

FRANÇOISE. No bad news?

MARCEL (*in spite of himself*). On the contrary!

FRANÇOISE. Oh!

MARCEL (*embarrassed*). It's from that American woman who saw my picture the other day — at Goupil's, you remember? She insists that I give it to her for ten thousand francs. I really think I'll let her have it. Nowadays you never can tell —

FRANÇOISE. I think you would be very wise to sell.

MARCEL (*handing her the telegram*). Don't you believe me?

FRANÇOISE. Absolutely.

[*Marcel puts the telegram in his pocket. A pause.*

MARCEL (*hesitating before he leaves; aside*). She's a darling; a perfect little darling.

FRANÇOISE. Then you're not going out?

MARCEL (*surprised*). Do you want to send me away?

FRANÇOISE. If you're going out to lunch, you had better hurry — the train leaves in a few minutes.

MARCEL (*becoming suddenly affectionate*). How can I hurry when you are so charming? You're adorable this morning!

FRANÇOISE. D'you think so?

[*A pause.*

MARCEL (*aside*). Curious, but every time I have a rendezvous, she's that way!

FRANÇOISE. Good-by, then; I've had enough of you! If you stay you'll upset all my plans. I'd quite made up my mind to be melancholy and alone. It's impossible to be either gay or sad with you! Run along!

MARCEL (*taking off his hat, which he had put on some moments before*). I tell you this is my house, and this my studio. Your house is there by the garden.

FRANÇOISE. Yes, it's only there that you are my husband.

MARCEL (*contradicting her*). Oh! (*Reproachfully, and with tenderness*) Tell me, Françoise, why don't you ever want to go out with me?

FRANÇOISE. You know I don't like society.

MARCEL. I 'm seen so much alone!

FRANÇOISE. So much the better for you; you will be taken for a bachelor!

MARCEL. One might think to hear you that husband and wife ought never to live together.

FRANÇOISE. Perhaps I should see you oftener if we were n't married!

MARCEL. Is n't it a pleasure to you, Madame, to be in the arms of your husband?

FRANÇOISE. Is n't it likewise a pleasure to be able to say, "He is free, I am not his wife, he is not my husband; I am not his duty, a millstone around his neck; I am his avocation, his love? If he leaves me, I know he is tired of me, but if he comes back, then I know he loves me."

MARCEL. Françoise, you are an extremist!

FRANÇOISE. You think so?

MARCEL. You are!

FRANÇOISE. And then — ?

MARCEL. I know your philosophy is nothing but love. (*A pause*) You cry sometimes, don't you? When I 'm not here?

FRANÇOISE. Just a little.

MARCEL. I must make you very unhappy! When you are sad, don't hide it from me, Françoise; one of your tears would force me to do anything in the world for you.

FRANÇOISE. One, yes! But, many — ?

MARCEL. Don't make fun of me: I am serious. If I told you that my affection for you is as great as yours, I —

FRANÇOISE. You would be lying.

MARCEL. That may be! But it seems to me I adore you! Every time I leave you, I feel so lonely; I wander about like a lost soul! I think that something must be happening to you. And when I come home at midnight, and open the door, I feel an exquisite sensation — Is that love? You ought to know — you are so adept!

FRANÇOISE. Perhaps.

MARCEL (*unthinkingly*). You know, Françoise, one can never be sure of one's self.

FRANÇOISE. Of course!

MARCEL. No one can say, "I love to-day, and I shall love to-morrow." You no more than any one else.

FRANÇOISE (*offended*). I?

MARCEL. How can you tell, whether in fifteen years —?

FRANÇOISE. Oh, I'm a little child — I'm different from the others — I shall always love the same man all his life. But go on, you were saying —?

MARCEL. Nothing. I want you to be happy, in spite of everything — no matter what may happen — no matter what I may do.

FRANÇOISE. Even if you should deceive me?

MARCEL (*tenderly*). Deceive you? Never! I care nothing about other women! You are happiness — not a mere pastime.

FRANÇOISE. Alas!

MARCEL. Why alas?

FRANÇOISE. Because it is easier to do without happiness than pleasure.

MARCEL (*tenderly*). Oh, you are all that is highest and best in my life — I prefer you to everything else! Let a woman come between us, and she will have me to deal with! Call it selfishness, if you will, or egotism — but your peace of mind is an absolute necessity to me!

FRANÇOISE. You need not prepare me for the future, you bad boy; I resigned myself to "possibilities" some time ago. I'm inexperienced and young in years, but I'm older than you.

MARCEL. Shall I tell you something? I never deserved you!

FRANÇOISE. That's true.

MARCEL. When I think how happy you might have made some good and worthy man, and that —

FRANÇOISE. Who then would have made me happy?

MARCEL. You are not happy now.

FRANÇOISE. I didn't marry for happiness; I married in order to have you.

MARCEL. I 'm a fool! — It would be nice, wouldn't it, if I were an unfaithful husband!

FRANÇOISE. I 'm sure you will never be that.

MARCEL. Do you really think so?

FRANÇOISE. I am positive. What would be the use in deceiving me? I should be so unhappy, and you wouldn't be a bit happier.

MARCEL. You are right.

FRANÇOISE. No, you will not deceive me. To begin with, I have a great deal of luck.

MARCEL (*gaily*). Of course you have; you don't know how much!

FRANÇOISE (*coquettishly*). Tell me!

MARCEL. What a child you are!

FRANÇOISE. I've run risks, haven't I?

MARCEL. I should think so! Sometimes I imagine that my happiness does not lie altogether in those sparkling eyes of yours, and I try to fall in love with another woman; I get deeper and deeper for a week or two, and think I am terribly infatuated. But just as I am about to take the fatal leap, I fail: Françoise' luck, you see! At bottom, I 'm a commencer; I can't imagine what it is that saves me — and you. Sometimes *she* has done something to displease me, sometimes a divine word from your lips — and a mere nothing, something quite insignificant! For instance, Wednesday, I missed the train, and I came back and had dinner with you. You see, Françoise' luck!

FRANÇOISE. Then you 're not going out to-day, are you?

MARCEL. Nor to-morrow; the whole day is yours. We 'll close the door!

FRANÇOISE. Aren't you happy?

MARCEL (*kissing her behind the ear*). Hurry up, you lazy child!

FRANÇOISE. I 'm not pretty, but I have my good points.

MARCEL. Not pretty?

FRANÇOISE. No, but I deserve to be.

[*Madeleine appears at the back.*

MADELEINE. I beg your pardon!

[*Françoise gives an exclamation of surprise and escapes through the door to the right without looking a second time at the visitor.*

MARCEL (*surprised*). Madeleine!

[*A pause.*

MADELEINE (*stylishly dressed. With an air of bravura*). So this is the way you deceive me!

MARCEL (*gaily*). My dear, if you think that during these three years —

MADELEINE. I beg your pardon for interrupting your little *tête-à-tête*, Marcel, but your door was open, and I found no servant to announce me.

MARCEL. You know you are always welcome here.

MADELEINE. Your wife is very attractive.

MARCEL. Isn't she? Shall I introduce you?

MADELEINE. Later — I 've come to see *you*.

MARCEL. I must confess your visit is a little surprising.

MADELEINE. Especially after my sending that telegram this morning. I thought I should prefer not to trouble you.

MARCEL (*uncertain*). Ah!

MADELEINE. Yes.

MARCEL. Well?

MADELEINE. Well, no!

MARCEL. I'm sorry. (*Kissing her hand*) I'm glad to see you, at any rate.

MADELEINE. Same studio as always, eh?

MARCEL. You are still as charming as ever.

MADELEINE. You are as handsome as ever.

MARCEL. I can say no less for you.

MADELEINE. I'm only twenty-eight.

MARCEL. But your husband is fifty: that keeps you young. How long have you been back?

MADELEINE. A week.

MARCEL. And I haven't seen Guérin yet!

MADELEINE. There's no hurry.

MARCEL. What's the matter?

MADELEINE. He's a bit troubled: you know how jealous he is! Well, yesterday, when I was out, he went through all my private papers —

MARCEL. Naturally he came across some letters.

MADELEINE. *The* letters, my dear!

MARCEL. Mine?

MADELEINE. Yes — (*Gesture from Marcel*) Old letters.

MARCEL. You kept them?

MADELEINE. From a celebrity? Of course!

MARCEL. The devil!

MADELEINE. Ungrateful!

MARCEL. I beg your pardon —

MADELEINE. You can imagine my explanation following the discovery. My dear Marcel, there's going to be a divorce.

MARCEL. A — ! A divorce?

MADELEINE. Don't pity me too much. After all, I shall be free — almost happy.

MARCEL. What resignation!

MADELEINE. Only —

MARCEL. Only what?

MADELEINE. He is going to send you his seconds.

MARCEL (*gaily*). A duel? — To-day? You're not serious?

MADELEINE. I think he wants to kill you.

MARCEL. But that was an affair of three years ago! Why, to begin with, he hasn't the right!

MADELEINE. Because of the lapse of time?

MARCEL. Three years is three years.

MADELEINE. You're right: *now* you are not in love with his wife: you love your own. Time has changed everything. Now your own happiness is all-sufficient. I can easily understand your indignation against my husband.

MARCEL. Oh, I —

MADELEINE. My husband is slow but he's sure, isn't he?

MARCEL. You're cruel, Madeleine.

MADELEINE. If it's ancient history for you, it's only too recent for him!

MARCEL. Let's not speak about him!

MADELEINE. But he should be a very interesting topic of conversation just now!

MARCEL. I hadn't foreseen his being so cut up.

MADELEINE. You must tell him how sorry you are when you see him.

MARCEL. At the duel?

MADELEINE. Elsewhere!

MARCEL. Where? Here, in my house?

MADELEINE. My dear, he may want to tell you what he feels. [*A pause.*

MARCEL (*aside, troubled*). The devil! — And Françoise? (*Another pause*) Oh, a duel! Well, I ought to risk my life for you; you have done the same thing for me many times.

MADELEINE. Oh, I was not so careful as you were then.

MARCEL. You are not telling me everything, Madeleine. What put it into your husband's head to look through your papers?

MADELEINE. Ah!

MARCEL. Well, evidently *I* couldn't have excited his jealousy. For a long time he has had no reason to suspect me! Were they my letters he was looking for?

MADELEINE. That is my affair!

MARCEL. Then I am expiating for some one else?

MADELEINE. I'm afraid so.

MARCEL. Perfect!

MADELEINE. Forgive me!

MARCEL (*reproachfully*). So you are deceiving him?

MADELEINE. You are a perfect friend to-day!

MARCEL. Then you really have a lover?

MADELEINE. A second lover! That would be disgraceful, wouldn't it?

MARCEL. The first step is the one with the worst consequences.

MADELEINE. What are you smiling at?

MARCEL. Oh, the happiness of others — ! Well, let's have no bitterness.

MADELEINE. No, you might feel remorse!

MARCEL. Oh, Madeleine, why am I not the guilty one this time? — you are always so beautiful!

MADELEINE. Your fault! You should have kept what you had!

MARCEL. I thought you were tired of me.

MADELEINE. You will never know what I suffered; I cried like an abandoned shop-girl!

MARCEL. Not for long, though?

MADELEINE. Three months. When I think I once loved you so much, and here I am before you so calm and indifferent! You look like anybody else now. How funny, how disgusting life is! You meet some one, do no end of foolish and wicked and mean things in order to belong to him, and the day comes when you don't know one another. Each takes his turn! I think it would have been better — (*Gesture from Marcel*) Yes — I ought to try to forget everything.

MARCEL. That's all buried in the past! Wasn't it worth the trouble, the suffering that we have to undergo now?

MADELEINE. You too! You have to recall — !

MARCEL. I'm sorry, but I didn't begin this conversation —

MADELEINE. Never mind! It's all over, — let's say nothing more about it!

MARCEL. No, please! Let's — curse me, Madeleine, say anything you like about me — I deserve it all!

MADELEINE. Stop! Behave yourself, you married man! What if your wife heard you!

MARCEL. She? Dear child! She is much too afraid of what I might say to listen.

MADELEINE. Dear child! You cynic! I'll wager you have not been a model husband since your marriage!

MARCEL. You are mistaken there, my dear.

MADELEINE. You are lying!

MARCEL. Seriously; and I'm more surprised than you at the fact — but it's true.

MADELEINE. Poor Marcel!

MARCEL. I do suffer!

MADELEINE. Then you are a faithful husband?

MARCEL. I am frivolous and — compromising — that is all.

MADELEINE. It's rather funny: you seem somehow to be ready to belong to some one!

MARCEL. Madeleine, you are the first who has come near tempting me.

MADELEINE. Is it possible?

MARCEL. I feel myself weakening.

MADELEINE. Thank you so much for thinking of me, dear, — I appreciate it highly, but for the time being, I'll — consider.

MARCEL. Have you made up your mind?

MADELEINE. We shall see later; I'll think it over — perhaps! Yet, I rather doubt if — ! You haven't been nice to me to-day, your open honest face hasn't pleased me at all. Then you're so carelessly dressed! I don't think you're at all interesting any more. No, I hardly think so!

MARCEL. But, Madeleine —

MADELEINE. Don't call me Madeleine.

MARCEL. Madame Guérin! Madame Guérin! if I told you how much your telegram meant to me! How excited I was! I trembled when I read it!

MADELEINE. I'll warrant you read it before your wife?

MARCEL. It was so charming of you!

MADELEINE. How depraved you are!

MARCEL. How well you know me!

MADELEINE. Fool!

MARCEL. I adore you!

MADELEINE. That's merely a notion of yours! You imagine that since you haven't seen me for so long — I've just come back from a long trip!

MARCEL. Don't shake my faith in you!

MADELEINE. Think of your duties, my dear; don't forget —

MARCEL. Of my children? I have none.

MADELEINE. Of your wife.

MARCEL (*in desperation*). You always speak of her!

MADELEINE. Love her, my friend, and if my husband does n't kill you to-morrow, continue to love her in peace and quiet. You are made for a virtuous life now — any one can see that. I'm flattering you when I consider you a libertine. You've been spoiled by too much happiness, that's the trouble with you!

MARCEL (*trying to kiss her*). Madeleine, if you only — !

MADELEINE (*evading him*). Are you out of your wits?

MARCEL. Forgive me: I haven't quite forgotten —! Well, if I am killed it will be for a good reason.

MADELEINE. Poor dear!

MARCEL. It will! This duel is going to compromise you fearfully. Come now, every one will accuse you to-morrow; what difference does it make to you?

MADELEINE. I'm not in the mood!

MARCEL. Now *you* are lying!

MADELEINE. I don't love you.

MARCEL. Nonsense! You 're sulking!

MADELEINE. How childish! Don't touch me!! You want me to be unfaithful to everybody! Never! (*Changing*) Yet — ! No; it would be too foolish! Good-by!

MARCEL (*kissing her as she tries to pass him*). Not before —

MADELEINE. Oh, you've mussed my hat; how awkward of you! (*Trying to escape from Marcel's embrace*) Let me go!

MARCEL (*jokingly*). Let you go? In a few days!

MADELEINE. Good-by! My husband may come any moment —

MARCEL. Are you afraid?

MADELEINE. Yes, I'm afraid he might forgive me!

MARCEL. One minute more!

MADELEINE. No! I have just time — I'm going away this evening —

MARCEL. Going away?

MADELEINE. To London.

MARCEL. With — *him*, the other?

MADELEINE. I hope so.

MARCEL. Who knows? He may be waiting this moment for you at Madame de Montglat's, your aunt's —

MADELEINE. They are playing cards together —

MARCEL. The way we are! What a family!

MADELEINE. Impudent!

MARCEL. That's why you came.

MADELEINE (*about to leave*). Shall I go out through the models' door, as I used to?

MARCEL. If I were still a bachelor you would n't leave me like this! You would miss your train this evening — I'll tell you that!

MADELEINE. You may very well look at that long sofa! No, no, my dear: not to-day, thanks!

MARCEL. In an hour, then, at Madame de Montglat's!

MADELEINE. Take care, or I'll make you meet your successor!

MARCEL. Then I can see whether you are still a woman of taste!

MADELEINE. Ah, men are very — I'll say the word after I leave. [*She goes out through the little door.*

MARCEL (*alone*). "Men are very — !" If we were, the women would have a very stupid time of it!

[*He is about to follow Madeleine. Enter Françoise.*

FRANÇOISE. Who was that stylish looking woman who just left, Marcel?

MARCEL (*embarrassed*). Madame Jackson, my American friend.

FRANÇOISE. Well?

MARCEL. My picture? Sold!

FRANÇOISE. Ten thousand? Splendid! Don't you think so? You don't seem very happy!

MARCEL. The idea!

[*He picks up his hat.*

FRANÇOISE (*jealously*). Are you going to leave me?

MARCEL. I am just going to Goupil's and tell him.

FRANÇOISE. Then I'll have to lunch all by myself? (*Marcel stops an instant before the mirror*) You look lovely.

MARCEL (*turning round*). I —

FRANÇOISE. Oh, you'll succeed — !

[*A pause.*

MARCEL (*enchanted, in spite of himself*). What can you be thinking of! (*Aside*) What if she were after all my happiness? (*Reproachfully*) Now Françoise —

FRANÇOISE. I was only joking.

MARCEL (*ready to leave*). No moping, remember? I can't have that!

FRANÇOISE. I know!

MARCEL (*tenderly. He stands at the threshold. Aside*). Poor child! — Well! I *may* fail!

[*He goes out, left.*

FRANÇOISE (*sadly*). Where is he going? Probably to a rendezvous. Oh, if he is! Will my luck fail me to-day? Soon he'll come back again, well satisfied with himself! I talk to him so much about my resignation, I wonder whether he believes in it? Why must I be tormented this way forever?

[*Enter Jean, with a visiting-card in his hand.*

JEAN. Is Monsieur not here?

FRANÇOISE. Let me see!

[*She takes the card.*

JEAN. The gentleman is waiting, Madame.

FRANÇOISE. Ask him to come in. Quick, now!

[*Jean goes out. Enter Guérin, at the back. As he sees Françoise, he hesitates before coming to her.*

FRANÇOISE (*cordially*). Come in, Monsieur. I have never seen you, but I know you very well, already.

GUÉRIN (*a large, strong man, with grayish hair*). Thank you, Madame. I thought I should find M. Desroches at home. If you will excuse me —

FRANÇOISE. I beg you — !

GUÉRIN. I fear I am intruding: it's so early.

FRANÇOISE. You intruding in Marcel's home!

GUÉRIN. Madame —

FRANÇOISE. My husband will return soon, Monsieur.

GUÉRIN (*brightening*). Ah, good!

FRANÇOISE. Will you wait for him here in the studio?

GUÉRIN (*advancing*). Really, Madame, I should be very ungrateful were I to refuse your kindness.

FRANÇOISE. Here are magazines and newspapers — I shall ask to be excused. (*As she is about to leave*) It was rather difficult to make you stay!

GUÉRIN. Forgive me, Madame. (*Aside ironically*) Too bad — ! She's decidedly charming!

[*Having gone up-stage, Françoise suddenly retraces her steps.*

FRANÇOISE. It seems a little strange to you, Monsieur — doesn't it? — to see a woman in this bachelor studio — quite at home?

GUÉRIN. Why, Madame —

FRANÇOISE. Before leaving you alone — which I shall do in a moment — you must know that there is one woman who is very glad to know you have returned to Paris!

GUÉRIN. We just arrived this week.

FRANÇOISE. Good!

GUÉRIN (*ironically*). It's so long since I've seen Marcel —

FRANÇOISE. Three years.

GUÉRIN. So many things have happened since!

FRANÇOISE. You find him a married man, for one thing —

GUÉRIN. Happily married!

FRANÇOISE. Yes, happily!

GUÉRIN. Dear old Marcel! I'll be so glad to see him!

FRANÇOISE. I see you haven't forgotten my husband, Monsieur. Thank you!

GUÉRIN. How can I help admiring so stout and loyal a heart as his!

FRANÇOISE. You'll have to like me, too!

GUÉRIN. I already do.

FRANÇOISE. Really? Then you believe everything you write?

GUÉRIN. Yes, Madame.

FRANÇOISE. Take care! This morning I was re-reading one of your letters, in which you promised me your heartiest support. (*Holding out her hand to him*) Then we're friends, are we not?

GUÉRIN (*after hesitating awhile, takes her hand in his*). Good friends, Madame!

FRANÇOISE. Word of honor?

GUÉRIN. Word of honor!

FRANÇOISE (*sitting*). Then I'll stay. Sit down, and let's talk! (*Guérin is uncertain*) We have so much to say to each other! Let's talk about you first.

GUÉRIN (*forced to sit down*). About me? But I —

FRANÇOISE. Yes, about you!

GUÉRIN (*quickly*). No, about *your* happiness, your welfare — !

FRANÇOISE. About my great happiness!

GUÉRIN (*ironically*). Let us speak about your — existence — which you are so content with. I must know all the happiness of this house!

FRANÇOISE. Happy people never have anything to say.

GUÉRIN. You never have troubles, I presume?

FRANÇOISE. None, so far.

GUÉRIN. What might happen? To-day you are living peacefully with Marcel, a man whose marriage with you was strongly opposed, it seems. Life owes you no more than it has already given you.

FRANÇOISE. My happiness is complete. I had never imagined that the goodness of a man could make a woman so happy!

GUÉRIN. The goodness — ?

FRANÇOISE. Of course!

GUÉRIN. The love, you mean, Madame!

FRANÇOISE. Oh, Marcel's love for me — !

GUÉRIN. Something lacking?

FRANÇOISE. Oh, no!

GUÉRIN (*interested*). Tell me. Am I not your friend?

FRANÇOISE. Seriously, Monsieur, you know him very well, — how could he possibly be in love with me? Is it even possible? He lets me love him, and I ask nothing more.

GUÉRIN. Nothing?

FRANÇOISE. Only to be allowed to continue to do so. (*Gesture from Guérin*) I am not at all like other women. I don't ask for rights; but I do demand tenderness and consideration. He is free, I am not — I'll admit that. But I don't mind, I only hope that we may continue as we are!

GUÉRIN. Have you some presentiment, Madame?

FRANÇOISE. I am afraid, Monsieur. My happiness is not of the proud, demonstrative variety; it is a kind of happiness that is continually trembling for its safety. If I told you —

GUÉRIN. Do tell me!

FRANÇOISE. Later! How I pity one who loves and has to suffer for it!

GUÉRIN (*surprised*). You — !

FRANÇOISE. I am on the side of the jealous, of the betrayed —

GUÉRIN (*aside, and truly moved to sympathy*). Poor little woman! (*With great sincerity*) Then you are not sure of him?

FRANÇOISE (*growing more and more excited*). He is Marcel! Admit for a moment that he loves me to-day — I want so to believe it! — To-morrow will he love me? Does he himself know whether he will love me then? Isn't he at the mercy of whims, a passing fantasy — of the weather, or the appearance of the first woman he happens to meet? I am only twenty, and I am not always as careful as I might be. Happiness is so difficult!

GUÉRIN. Yes, it is. (*To himself*) It is! (*To Françoise*) Perhaps you are conscientious, too sincere?

FRANÇOISE. I feel that; yes, I think I am, but every time I try to hide my affection from him, he becomes indifferent,

almost mean — as if he were glad to be rid of some duty — of being good!

GUÉRIN. So it 's come to that!

FRANÇOISE. You see, Marcel can't get used to the idea that his other life is over, dead and buried, that he 's married for good — that he must do as others do. I do my best and tell him, but my very presence only reminds him of his duties as a husband. For instance (*interrupting herself*), here I am telling you all this —

GUÉRIN. Oh! — Please!

FRANÇOISE (*with bitterness*). He likes to go out alone at night, without me. He knows me well enough to understand that his being away makes me very unhappy, and as a matter of form, of common courtesy, he asks me whether I should like to go with him. I try to reason with myself, and convince myself that he doesn't mean what he says, but I can't help feeling sincerely happy when once in a while I do accept his invitation. But the moment we leave the house I see my mistake. Then he pretends to be in high spirits, but I know all the time he is merely acting a part; and when we come home again he lets drop without fail some hint about his having lost his liberty, that he took me out in a moment of weakness, that he really wanted to be alone.

GUÉRIN (*interrupting*). And when he does go out alone —?

FRANÇOISE. Then I am most unhappy; I 'm in torment for hours and hours. I wonder where he can be, and then I fear he won't come back at all. When the door opens, when I hear him come in, I 'm so happy that I pay no attention to what he tells me. But I made a solemn promise with myself never to give the slightest indication of jealousy. My face is always tranquil, and what I say to him never betrays what I feel. I never knowingly betray myself, but his taking way, his tenderness, soon make me confess every fear; then he turns round, and, using my own confessions as weapons, shows me how wrong I am to be so afraid and suspicious. And when sometimes I say

nothing to him, even when he tries to make me confess, he punishes me most severely by telling me stories of his affairs, narrow escapes, and all his temptations. He once told me about an old mistress of his, whom he had just seen, a very clever woman, who was never jealous! Or else he comes in so late that I have to be glad, for if he came in later, it would have been all night! He tells me he had some splendid opportunity, and had to give it up! A thousand things like that! He seems to delight in making me suspect and doubt him!

GUÉRIN. Poor little woman!

FRANÇOISE. That's my life; as for my happiness, it exists from day to day. (*With an air of revolt.*) If I only had the right to be unhappy! But I must always wear a smile; I must be happy, not only in his presence, officially, but to the very depths of my soul! So that he may deceive me without the slightest feeling of remorse! It is his pleasure!

[*She bursts into tears.*

GUÉRIN (*rising*). The selfish brute!

FRANÇOISE. Isn't my suffering a reproach to him?

GUÉRIN. I pity you, Madame, and I think I understand you better than any one else. I have trouble not unlike your own; perhaps greater, inconsolable troubles.

FRANÇOISE. If you understand me, Monsieur, advise me. I need you!

GUÉRIN (*startled back into reality*). Me, your aid? I? (*Aside*) No!

FRANÇOISE. You spoke of your friendship. The time has come, — prove that it is real!

GUÉRIN. Madame, why did I ever see you? Why did I listen to you?

FRANÇOISE. What have you to regret?

GUÉRIN. Nothing, Madame, nothing.

FRANÇOISE. Explain yourself, Monsieur. You — you make me afraid!

GUÉRIN (*trying to calm her suspicions*). Don't cry like that!

There is nothing to behave that way about! Your husband doesn't love you as he ought, but he does love you. You are jealous, that's what's troubling you. And for that matter, why should he deceive you? That would be too unjust —

FRANÇOISE (*excited*). Too unjust! You are right, Monsieur! No matter how cynical, how blasé a man may be, isn't it his duty, his sacred duty to say to himself, "I have found a good and true woman in this world of deception; she is a woman who adores me, who is only too ready to invent any excuse for me! She bears my name and honors it; no matter what I do, she is always true, — of that I am positive. I am always foremost in her thoughts, and I shall be her only love." When a man can say all that, Monsieur, isn't that real, true happiness?

GUÉRIN (*sobbing*). Yes — that is happiness!

FRANÇOISE. You are crying! [*A pause.*

GUÉRIN. My wife — deceived me!

FRANÇOISE. Oh! — (*A pause*) Marcel —

GUÉRIN. Your happiness is in no danger! Yesterday I found some old letters, in a desk — old letters — that was all! You weren't his wife at the time. It's all ancient history.

FRANÇOISE (*aside*). Who knows?

GUÉRIN. Forgive me, Madame; your troubles make me think of my own. When you told of the happiness you can still give, I couldn't help thinking of what I had lost!

FRANÇOISE. So you have come to get my husband to fight a duel with you?

GUÉRIN. Madame —

FRANÇOISE. You are going to fight him? Answer me.

GUÉRIN. My life is a wreck now — I must —

FRANÇOISE. I don't ask you to forget; Monsieur —

GUÉRIN. Don't you think I have a right — ?

FRANÇOISE. Stop!

GUÉRIN. No, then; I shall not try to kill him. You love him too much! I couldn't do it now! In striking him I

should be injuring you, and you don't deserve to suffer; you have betrayed no one! The happiness you have just taught me to know is as sacred and inviolable as my honor, my unhappiness. I shall not seek revenge.

FRANÇOISE (*gratefully*). Oh, Monsieur!

GUÉRIN. I am willing he should live, because he is so dear, so necessary to you. Keep him. If he wants to spoil your happiness, his be the blame! I shall not do it! It would be sacrilege! Good-by, Madame, good-by.

[*Guérin goes out, back; Françoise falls into a chair, sobbing. Enter Marcel by the little door.*

MARCEL (*aside, with a melancholy air*). Refused to see me!

FRANÇOISE (*distantly*). Oh, it's you!

MARCEL (*good-humoredly*). Yes, it's I. (*A pause. He goes toward her*) You have been crying! Have you seen Guérin? He's been here!

FRANÇOISE. Marcel —

MARCEL. Did he dare tell you — !

FRANÇOISE. You won't see any more of him.

MARCEL (*astounded*). He 's not going to fight?

FRANÇOISE. He refuses.

MARCEL. Thank you!

FRANÇOISE. I took good care of your dignity, you may be sure of that. Here we were together; I told him the story of my life during the last year — how I loved you — and then he broke down. — When I learned the truth, he said he would go away for the sake of my happiness.

MARCEL. I was a coward to deceive that man! — Is this a final sentence that you pass on me?

FRANÇOISE. Marcel!

MARCEL. Both of you are big! You have big hearts! I admire you both more than I can say.

FRANÇOISE (*incredulously*). Where are you going? To get him to fight with you?

MARCEL (*returning to her; angrily*). How can I, now? After what you have done, it would be absurd. Why the devil did you have to mix yourself up in something that didn't

concern you? I was only looking for a chance to fight that duel!

FRANÇOISE. Looking for a chance?

MARCEL. Oh, I —

FRANÇOISE. Why?

MARCEL (*between his teeth*). That's my affair! Everybody has his enemies — his insults to avenge. It was a very good thing that that gentleman didn't happen across my path!

FRANÇOISE. How can you dare to recall what he has been generous enough to forget?

MARCEL. How do you know that I haven't a special reason for fighting this duel? A legitimate reason, that must be concealed from you?

FRANÇOISE. You are mistaken, dear: I guess that reason perfectly.

MARCEL. Really?

FRANÇOISE. I know it.

MARCEL (*bursting forth*). Oh! Good!! You haven't always been so frightfully profound!

FRANÇOISE. Yes, I have, and your irony only proves that I have not been so much mistaken in what I have felt by intuition.

MARCEL. Ah, marriage!

FRANÇOISE. Ah, duty!

MARCEL. I love Madame Guérin, don't I?

FRANÇOISE. I don't say that.

MARCEL. You think it.

FRANÇOISE. And if I do? Would it be a crime to think it? You once loved her — perhaps you have seen her again, not very long ago. Do I know where you go? You never tell me.

MARCEL. I tell you too much!

FRANÇOISE. I think you do.

MARCEL. You're jealous!

FRANÇOISE. Common, if you like. Come, you must admit, Marcel, Madame Guérin has something to do with your excitement now?

MARCEL. Very well then, I love her, I adore her! Are you satisfied now?

FRANÇOISE. You should have told me that at first, my dear; I should never have tried to keep you away from her.

[*She breaks into tears.*

MARCEL. She's crying! God, there's my liberty!

FRANÇOISE (*bitterly*). Your liberty? I did not suffer when I promised you your liberty.

MARCEL. That was your "resignation"!

FRANÇOISE. You knew life, I did not. You ought never to have accepted it!

MARCEL. You're like all the rest!

FRANÇOISE (*more excited*). Doesn't unhappiness level us all?

MARCEL. I see it does!

FRANÇOISE. What can you ask for them? So long as you have no great happiness like mine, you are ready enough to make any sacrifice, but, when once you have it, you never resign yourself to losing it.

MARCEL. That's just the difficulty.

FRANÇOISE. Be a little patient, dear: I have not yet reached that state of cynicism and subtlety which you seem to want in your wife — I thought I came near to your ideal once! Perhaps there's some hope for me yet: I have promised myself that I should do my best to satisfy your ideal.

MARCEL (*moved*). I don't ask that.

FRANÇOISE. You are right, I am very foolish to try to struggle. What will be the good? It will suffice when I have lost the dearest creature to me on earth — through my foolishness, my blunders!

MARCEL. The dearest creature — ?

FRANÇOISE. I can't help it if he seems so to me!

MARCEL (*disarmed*). You — you're trying to appeal to my vanity!

FRANÇOISE. I am hardly in the mood for joking.

MARCEL (*tenderly, as he falls at her feet*). But you make me

say things like that — I don't know what — ! I am not bad — really bad! No, I have not deceived you! I love you, and only you! You!! You know that, Françoise! Ask — ask any woman!! All women!

[*A pause.*

FRANÇOISE (*smiling through her tears*). Best of husbands! You're not going out then? You'll stay?

MARCEL (*in Françoise' arms*). Can I go now, now that I'm here? You are so pretty that I —

FRANÇOISE. Not when I 'm in trouble.

MARCEL. Don't cry!

FRANÇOISE. I forgive you!

MARCEL. Wait, I have n't confessed everything.

FRANÇOISE. Not another word!

MARCEL. I want to be sincere!

FRANÇOISE. I prefer to have you lie to me!

MARCEL. First, read this telegram — the one I received this morning.

FRANÇOISE (*surprised*). From Madame Guérin?

MARCEL. You saw her not long ago. Yes, she calmly told me —

FRANÇOISE. That her husband had found some letters!

MARCEL. And that she was about to leave for England with her lover.

FRANÇOISE. Then she is quite consoled?

MARCEL. Perfectly.

FRANÇOISE. Poor Marcel! And you went to see her and try to prevent her going away with him?

MARCEL. My foolishness was well punished. She would n't receive me.

FRANÇOISE. Then I am the only one left who loves you? How happy I am!

MARCEL. I'll kill that love some day with my ridiculous affairs!

FRANÇOISE (*gravely*). I defy you!

MARCEL (*playfully*). Then I no longer have the right to provoke Monsieur Guérin? Now?

FRANÇOISE (*gaily*). You are growing old, Lovelace, his wife has deceived you!

MARCEL (*lovingly*). Françoise' luck! (*Sadly*) Married!

CURTAIN

MORITURI: TEIAS

HERMANN SUDERMANN

(1857–)

Hauptmann and Sudermann represent mileposts in the development of German Drama. Like Pinero and Jones, they find themselves dated, the moral problems for which they fought no longer imminent, the technique they made distinctive no longer novel. Without them, the realistic movement would not have advanced, as it did at the time, though the influence of Ibsen, which touched both England and Germany, opened many avenues of life so long closed to scrutiny by the false standards of romanticism. Sudermann's moral interest was often overlooked by the critics, who accused him of melodramatic concessions to the box-office in his plays, and to the reading public in his novels. Such a book as "Frau Sorge", published in 1887, attained its one hundred and twenty-fifth edition in 1912. Because of such financial success, the younger generation suspected Sudermann of trimming his sails, of placing royalties above problems. So they turned rather to Hauptmann than to him as the master.

Sudermann was born at Matziken, near Heydeking, East Prussia, on September 30, 1857; his father being a descendant of Dutch Mennonites, and an innkeeper by trade. He attended the Realschule at Elbing, the Realgymnasium at Tilsit, and the University of Königsberg, where he specialized in philology and history. His family being of moderate circumstances, he worked part of his time in an apothecary shop, to defray his expenses. It was while tutoring in various Berlin families that he studied at close range the *nouveaux riches*, so vividly portrayed in "Sodom's Ende" (1891).

Leaving the University in 1877, he became co-editor of the *Deutsches Reichblatt* (1881–1882), and thus entered the field of writing, with the influence of Young Germany, so recently nationalized, strongly marked in what he did. The year 1887 witnessed the publication of his "Twilight Tales" and "Dame Care", wherein he exhibited conscious particularity in characterization. His "Brothers and Sisters" (1888) and "Der Katzensteg" (1889) were issued just at the commencement of the realistic movement in the German Theater.

"The year 1889," claims Benjamin W. Wells, "marks a noteworthy crystallization of Sudermann's ideas of literature and life. The growing success of Zola, the rising fame of Schopenhauer, and, most of all, perhaps, the example of Ibsen and Tolstoï, modified the sturdy independence of his beginnings. The first result of the conflict of these forces within him is a pessimistic negation of morality."

The racial characteristics of Lithuania — dialect, and other differences — were made use of by Sudermann in "Johannisfeuer", and are one of many evidences that in his work there entered much that was autobiographical. "Frau Sorge" (1887) reflects his moods and reactions, his poverty and failures, even as "Der Katzensteg" pictured his home surroundings in childhood.

By the time, 1894, that his most distinctive novel, "It Was", was issued, Sudermann had broken into the theater with his first attack on moral and social conventions, in "Honor" (1890), continued with no abatement in "Home" (1893), brought to fame by Duse, Réjane, and others; "The Battle of the Butterflies" (1895); and "Happiness in a Nook" (1896).

His general theme was German provincial narrowness, and he brought to his treatment an interest in psychology which was paramount, and which was always involved in the breaking of tradition. Recall what Magda, in "Die Heimath" (1893), says: "To grow by sin is better than the purity you preach."

To English audiences "Magda" and "The Joy of Living"

are Sudermann's most familiar plays. "John the Baptist" created widespread discussion, resulting in the opposition of the Prussian censor, and the intervention of the Kaiser. During the World War, impregnated with the belief that God had made holy the German cause, Sudermann, during 1916, published three plays under the heading, "Die entgötterte Welt: Szenische Bilder aus Kranker Zeit." These dramas were "Die Freundin" (schauspiel); "Die gutgeschnittene Ecke" (tragikomödie); and "Das höhere Leben" (lustspiel).

From "Morituri" (1897), Sudermann's attempt, with "Roses" (1907), to use the one-act form, I have selected "Teias" for the present collection. Of the series, Professor Richard M. Meyer writes in a discriminating article on Sudermann. Death is the force that demands analysis under varying circumstances. He says: "Only when we can look death calmly in the face, do we feel the full richness of life, do we possess, compressed in the span of a single moment, all the possibilities of our existence. Proximity to death is thus made the test of the neglected happiness in both life and love of the Ostrogothic hero-king, the Prussian officer, and the French marshal." "Teias", asserts Otto Heller, "is an apotheosis of civic martyrdom." While independent in its action of the other two plays, "Teias" should be read as part of the trilogy also, for the sake of the unified idea at the basis of the philosophical theme which was always the center of Sudermann's interest.

WORKS

Honor. 1889. Leipzig Theatre, Berlin, November 27, 1889. Translated by H. R. Bankhage. Samuel French, New York.

The Destruction of Sodom. 1890. Played, November 5, 1890.

Home (Magda). 1893. Played by Duse, Modjeska, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, Mrs. Fiske, etc. Translated by C. E. A. Winslow. Samuel French, New York.

The Battle of the Butterflies. 1895.

Happiness in a Nook. 1896. As "The Vale of Content", translated by W. E. Leonard. See Dickinson, "Chief Contemporary Dramatists", Series I. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

Morituri: 1897.

Teja.
Fritzchen.
The Eternal Masculine.

Translated by Archibald Alexander. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1910. Teias, translated by Mary Harned. *Poet Lore*, Boston, 1897.

John the Baptist. 1898. Translated by Beatrice Marshall. John Lane Company, New York, 1908. Also by Mary Harned, *Poet Lore*, Boston, 1899. Also in Kuno Francke's "German Classics", Vol. 17, 168–249. Played by Sothern and Marlowe.

The Three Heron's Feathers. 1899. Translated by H. Porter. *Poet Lore*, Vol. 12, 161–234. Boston, 1900.

St. John's Fires. 1900. Translated and adapted by Charles Swickard. John W. Luce and Company, Boston, 1904. Also by Charlotte and H. C. Porter. *Poet Lore*, Vol. 15, 1–71. Boston, 1904. Also by G. E. Polk. Wilson, Minneapolis, 1905. Played by Nance O'Neill.

The Joy of Living. 1902. Translated by Edith Wharton. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1903. Played by Mrs. Patrick Campbell.

Storm-Brother Socrates. 1903.

Among the Stones. 1905.

The Flower Boat. 1905.

Roses: 1907.

Streaks of Light.
Margot.
The Last Visit.
The Faraway Princess.

Translated by Grace Frank. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1909.

Children of the Strand. 1910.

The Beggar of Syracuse. 1911.

A Good Reputation. 1912.

Die Lobgesänge des Claudian. 1914.
Die engötterte Welt. (The World made Godless): 1916.
Die Freundin.
Die gutgeschnittene Ecke.
Das höhere Leben.
} Leipzig Theater, January 28, 1916.
Die Raschhoffs. 1919.

Many of Sudermann's plays received adequate presentment by the Irving Place Theater Company, in New York. "The Song of Songs" was dramatized by Edward Sheldon.

MORITURI: TEIAS

BY HERMANN SUDERMANN

TRANSLATED BY

MARY HARNED

Characters

First Guard
Second Guard
Ildibad
Teias, the king
Balthilda, the king's bride
Amalaberga, the bride's mother
Agila, a bishop
Eurich, Athanarich, Theodemir } nobles
Nobles, choir boys, torch-bearers, etc.

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MORITURI: TEIAS

The scene is placed before the king's tent. The curtains in the background, lifted, afford an outlook over the camp of the Gothic warriors toward Vesuvius and the sea beyond, which is shining with the radiance of the setting sun. At the left rises a roughly hewn throne. In the center is a table with seats around it; at the right, the king's couch, made of skins, hastily piled together; above the couch a rack with a variety of weapons. Torch-bearers to right and left.

FIRST GUARD. Ho, there, have you gone to sleep?

SECOND GUARD. Why do you think I have gone to sleep?

FIRST GUARD. Because you stand slouching over your spear, bent like a Hunnish bow.

SECOND GUARD. I bend over because hunger gripes me in the stomach less then.

FIRST GUARD. That does no good. As little good as a riding girth. Afterward, when you have to stand straight again, it comes back worse.

SECOND GUARD. How long is this going to last?

FIRST GUARD. Until the ships come, — that is plain.

SECOND GUARD. Yes, but when will the ships come?

FIRST GUARD. How can I tell? Look up to the mountain, — up there on the Lactarian Hill stands the watchman. He can scan the sea for twenty-five miles, and if he does not know! — They must come from beyond the promontory of Misenum there.

SECOND GUARD. Yes, if the Byzantine let them through.

FIRST GUARD. The Byzantine has no ships.

SECOND GUARD. The Byzantine has so many ships that he can surround the whole Italian world with them as with a

hedge. As closely as the Byzantine Eunuch has surrounded us for the last seven weeks.

FIRST GUARD. For seven weeks!

SECOND GUARD. Do you know what I had to-day for a relish with my bread? The same bacon rind I broke my teeth on a week ago; I had made three crosses on it with my knife. A pleasant meeting! But to-day I ate it all. A noble feast for a king's wedding-day!

FIRST GUARD. Do you think the king had any more?

SECOND GUARD. Do you think we would let ourselves be slaughtered, riddled, spitted, and spoiled for him, if he had? Do you think we should lie here and watch like chained dogs, if we did not know that there was nothing to watch?

FIRST GUARD. There is gold enough lying about.

SECOND GUARD. Gold! Bah, gold! I have gold enough myself! In my cellar at Canusium I have a treasure buried — ah! They say the women, back there in the barricade of wagons, still have meat, and wine too.

FIRST GUARD. Oh, yes, the women are here now! You haven't a wife?

SECOND GUARD. A Greek dishonored my wife and I stabbed her! (*A pause*) Good! They say the women have meat. Wine too. But how long that — (*Noise and clattering of weapons, which gradually come nearer*) Well, the marriage is over, now.

FIRST GUARD. Hush! There comes old Ildibad — with the king's shield.

[*Both silently assume a military attitude. Enter Ildibad. Hangs the shield in its place, and moves the weapons, which are lying around, out of the way.*

ILDIBAD. Has any message been sent down?

FIRST GUARD. No.

ILDIBAD. Are you hungry?

SECOND GUARD. Yes, indeed!

ILDIBAD. Hunger is a woman's matter, — mark you that! And don't show your young queen such gloomy countenances. Such faces do not befit a wedding-day.

[*Teias and Balthilda appear before the tent, surrounded by the people, shouting. They enter, led by Bishop Agila, before them two choir boys, swinging censers; behind them Amalaberga, the bride's mother, Eurich, Athanarich, Theodemir, and other nobles and generals. The curtains of the tent are let down. The guards go out. The bishop lets go of the hands of the newly married pair and turns around to Amalaberga. Teias stands still, absorbed, gloomy. Balthilda casts a shy, pleading glance around. Painful silence.*

ILDIBAD (*aside*). You must say something, my king, to welcome your young wife.

TEIAS (*aside*). Must I? (*Seizing one of the choir boys by the nape of the neck*) Not so violently, lad; the smoke gets into our noses. If you did not swing a censer, what would you do?

THE BOY. I would swing my sword, king.

TEIAS. That is right. But hasten with your sword swinging, or it might easily come too late. (*Aside*) Ildibad, has nothing been seen of the ships?

ILDIBAD. Nothing, my king. But you must speak to your young wife.

TEIAS. Very well. So I have a wife, now, Bishop?

THE BISHOP. Here stands your wife, king, and awaits a word from you.

TEIAS. Pardon me, queen, if I do not find a word. I have grown up on the battle-field, and I have never known any other habitation. — You will hardly want to share it with me.

BALTHILDA. King — my mother — taught me — [*She falters.*

TEIAS (*with assumed gentleness*). Well, what did your mother teach you?

AMALABERGA. That a woman belongs to her husband, most of all in the hour of need, is what I taught her, king.

TEIAS. To you women, that may be true and sacred. — If only the husband, too, belonged to the wife in the hour of need! One thing more, Amalaberga. I hear that cocks

were crowing this morning in the barricade, where you women are. The warriors have eaten no meat for weeks. I advise you to deliver over the cocks to them.

[*Amalaberga bows.*

THE BISHOP. My king!

TEIAS. Well? You spoke so beautifully, just now, before your field altar, Bishop! Do you wish to make another speech?

THE BISHOP. I wish to speak to you, because bitterness consumes your soul.

TEIAS. Indeed? You think so! Well, I am listening.

THE BISHOP. Look you, you have arisen among us, youth, like the spirit of divine wrath. — The people did not count your years, but your deeds. Gray heads bowed down willingly before your youth, and whilst you had still a long time to serve as one of the humblest, even then you became our ruler. From the golden throne of Theodoric, where mildness sat in judgment; where Totila, smiling, granted pardons, — thence now your words of blood harshly resound. — Still misfortune clings to us like a poisoned wound. Hunted hither under the fiery throat of Vesuvius, we are now encamped here with wife and child, and Byzantium with its paid servants holds us clasped in its arms.

TEIAS. Indeed it does, ha! ha! Not even a mouse can escape.

THE BISHOP. Our eyes wander beseechingly out over the sea, for from thence God has promised us bread.

TEIAS (*aside*). No report has been received of the ships?

ILDIBAD (*aside*). None.

THE BISHOP. Before arming ourselves anew for other combats, we, free men, true to the ancient law, determined to choose a wife for you, so that the king in his own person would understand why the Goths love death.

TEIAS. Have you ever found that your king loved life too much?

THE BISHOP. My king!

TEIAS. No, you could not think that, for every hour of my life would make your thought ridiculous. — What if ancient law did command it, why needed you to blend my blood with this young girl's, who creeps before you and me in her mother's robes, trembling with fear? On so propitious a day, too, when hunger is making our wedding music. — Look at me, queen, — I must call you by your half-hour-old title, for, by God! I scarcely know your name, — I pray you, look at me. Do you know me?

BALTHILDA. You are the king, sire.

TEIAS. Yes; but for you I am to be not king, but man. — Do you know what kind of a man it is who stands here before you? — Look hither! Until now these arms have been bathed in reeking blood, not in the blood of men shed in manly conflict, — of that I do not speak; that is an honor to a man, — but in the blood of helpless children, of — (*Shuddering*) You will feel great joy when I put such arms as these around your neck! — You are listening to me? Have I not a beautiful voice, a sweet voice? It is only a little hoarse. It has screamed itself hoarse with orders to slay. — Surely it will be a peculiar pleasure for you to hear tender words, pronounced in this lovely, hoarse voice. Am I not exactly as if I were made to be a lover? These wise men knew all this, and therefore they pointed out to me my calling. — Or perhaps you think it will be your duty to divert your king agreeably during the tedium of our camp life, as the great Justinian is diverted in golden Byzantium, whilst he sends out his eunuch to kill Goths. Ha! ha! ha!

THE BISHOP. My king, take care that you do not rave.

TEIAS. Thank you, friend! All this is of no consequence, — this is my wedding humor. — But now I must speak to you seriously. (*He steps on the raised platform where the throne is placed*) On the golden throne of Theoderic, where mildness sat in judgment, I cannot, alas! take my seat, for it has been chopped up into fire-wood in Byzantium. — Neither can I grant pardons smilingly, like Totila, for no

one craves pardon now. The brilliant nation of the Goths has become a herd of famished wolves, and so it needed a wolf for its master. You, Bishop, have called me "the spirit of divine wrath." I am not that, — I am only the spirit of your own despair. As one who has hoped for nothing and wished for nothing all his life long, I stand before you, and shall fall before you. You knew this, and therefore you did wrong, you men, when you secretly cherished a reproach against me. Do not contradict me! — I read it plainly enough in your knitted brows. — Do not make a scapegoat of me because things go hard with us — I counsel you that!

THEODEMIR. King, do not upbraid us, — our last drop of blood is yours. Do not cast us into the same pot with these old men.

EURICH. We old men fight as well as they do; and we love you, too, youth, as well as they.

TEIAS. Enough, then! Your queen will learn soon enough how friends quarrel in misfortune. As you go through the camp say to the soldiers that the only thing that grieves their king, this day — this day of joy! — is it not a day of joy? — is that he is unable to offer them a worthy wedding feast — or, it may be — Ildibad!

ILDIBAD (*who has been speaking privately with the watchman who had entered and whom he had drawn aside to the right — in confusion*). Yes, sire!

TEIAS. What have we still in our store-room, old man?

ILDIBAD (*mastering his agitation*). You have given away almost all of your rations, king.

TEIAS. I asked you what was left.

ILDIBAD. A pitcher of sour milk, and a couple of stale bread-crusts.

TEIAS. Ha! ha! ha! You see now, queen, how poor a man you have married. But say to the people, that when the ships have come, I shall entertain all of them, then, in kingly fashion, — indeed it all belongs as much to them; — but don't say that to them, it would lessen their joy.

Tell them when they hear the horns blow, there will be meat and wine ready for them, on long tables, as much — (*To Ildibad, who, with signs of consternation, has stolen across the stage to his side*) What is the matter?

ILDIBAD (*aside*). The watchman has just come down from the mountain. The ships are lost.

TEIAS (*without changing his expression*). Lost — how? Through what?

ILDIBAD. Treason.

TEIAS. Verily! Yes — meat and wine, as much as any one can desire, on long white tables — and fruit from Sicily for the women — and sweetmeats from Massilia — [*Sinks staggering upon the throne and stares vacantly into the distance.*

THE MEN. What ails the king? Look to the king!

BALTHILDA. Mother, he is certainly hungry. (*Approaches him; the men draw back*) My king!

TEIAS. Who are you, woman? What do you want, woman?

BALTHILDA. Can I help you, sire?

TEIAS. Ah, queen! it is you. Pardon me! and pardon me, you men, also! [*Rises.*

THE BISHOP. King, you must husband your strength.

THEODEMIR. Yes, king, for all our sakes.

THE MEN. For all our sakes.

TEIAS. Truly you do well to remind me. You women, I beg you to return to your own quarters. — We must hold a council. Bishop, see to their escort!

AMALABERGA (*aside*). Bow, child!

BALTHILDA (*aside*). Mother, is he going to say nothing more to me?

AMALABERGA. Bow. [*Balthilda bows.*

TEIAS. Farewell!

[*Balthilda, Amalaberga and the Bishop go out. Outside are heard the shouts of applause with which they are greeted.*

TEIAS. I have sent away the women and the priest, for what follows now is a matter for us men only. Where is the watchman? Step forward, man.

THE MEN (*murmuring*). The watchman from the mountain! The watchman!

TEIAS. You must know, men — the ships are lost!

[*Tumult. Cries of horror.*

TEIAS. Silence, friends, silence! — Your name is Haribalt?

THE WATCHMAN. Yes, sire!

TEIAS. How long have you been at your post?

THE WATCHMAN. Since yesterday morning, sire.

TEIAS. Where are your two companions?

THE WATCHMAN. They remained up on the mountain, as you commanded, sire.

TEIAS. Good! Well, what did you see?

THE WATCHMAN. The smoke of Vesuvius, sire, overspread the sea in the direction of the promontory of Misenum, so we saw nothing until about the sixth hour this evening. Then, suddenly, the ships appeared — five in number — quite close to the shore, at the place where it is said a Roman city lies buried in ruins. — One of us was about to come down, when —

TEIAS. Stop! What kind of an ensign did the ships carry?

THE WATCHMAN. The foresail tied up crosswise, and —

TEIAS. And?

THE WATCHMAN. A palm-tree at the helm.

TEIAS. You saw the palm-tree?

THE WATCHMAN. As I see you, sire.

TEIAS. Good! Continue.

THE WATCHMAN. Then we saw that the fishing boats, in which the Byzantines catch fish for their meals, were swarming around the ships, quite close to them, and then —

TEIAS. What then?

THE WATCHMAN. Then, sire, they all steered quietly toward the enemy's camp. They are unloading there now.

[*The men hide their heads. Silence.*

TEIAS (*looks smilingly from one to another*). 'T is well! — I mean — Say nothing of this outside. — They shall learn about it from me. (*The watchman goes out*) Your counsel, ye men.

THEODEMIR. Sire, we know none.

TEIAS. And you, Eurich, with all your wisdom?

EURICH. Sire, I served under the great Theodoric; — he, too, would have known none.

TEIAS. Well, then, I know one. — It is short and easily understood, — to die! — Why do you look at me askance? Don't you understand me? Do you think I require you to hide yourselves in your mantles, like coward Greeks, and beg your neighbor for a stab in the back? Be at ease! At least, since I can no longer lead you on to honor, I shall keep you from dishonor. So long as thirty of us are able to wield our spears, our position is impregnable. But the hour will come — and that at no distant time — when the last arm, paralyzed by hunger, will no longer be able even to reach out and beg the approaching murderer for mercy.

THEODEMIR. That no Goth would do, king!

TEIAS. For what you are you can, for what you may become you cannot, answer. Therefore I counsel you, I command you, arm yourselves this night for our last battle. At the first gray of dawn we shall break out from the clefts of the mountains and place ourselves in the open plains against the Byzantines.

ALL. Sire, that is impossible.

THEODEMIR. King, remember, we are one against a hundred.

TEIAS. And you, Eurich?

EURICH. Sire, you would lead us into ruin.

TEIAS. Even so. Did I promise anything else? Do you think I am so inexperienced in the affairs of war that I do not know that? Why do you hesitate? When Totila led us on, we were more than a hundred thousand strong. Now we are still five of those same thousands. They all knew how to die; and have we, miserable remnant, forgotten?

ALL. No, king, no!

EURICH. Sire, let us have time to accustom ourselves to the horror of it.

TEIAS. Horror? What seems horrible to you? I am not speaking to Romans, who stagger from the mass into the lupanar, and out of the lupanar into the mass! There is not one among you whose breast is not as covered with scars as an old rock with lichen! You have played with death for twenty years, and now, when the game grows earnest, does a Goth speak of horror? What would you have? Would you lie here and starve? Would you eat each other up like rats? Good! — But I shall not deal so with you! Not I! To-morrow I take my spear and shield and go forth to conquer for myself, with my own fist, the bit of death for which I have thirsted and longed like a thief ever since you made me lord of your lost cause. And you, at least, my old fellow, you will come with me?

ILDIBAD (*throwing himself down before him*). I thank you, sire! Will I come with you!

ALL. We, too, king! All of us! All of us!

THEODEMIR. Praised shall you be, king, for showing us the way to our deliverance. Be not angry with us, that we were not immediately able to obey you. I see your great thought clearly now; out of sorrow and quarrels and despair we go up to death and not down. — Each will stride laughing over the corpse of another, and laughing sink down like him. A light will go out from us over the whole world. — Ah! that will be a drink from golden beakers. An intoxication will that be and an exultant blessedness! Thank you, my king! I have often envied you your crown; I no longer can.

TEIAS. What will happen will be very different from the way you paint it now, Theodemir; nevertheless, I rejoice that so much enthusiasm is still left to the Goths.

EURICH. Grant me, too, a word, king, for I have seen the golden times, and you are not the boldest only, but the wisest of all. — If we had delayed now, we should all have sunken defenseless beneath the murderer's sword, — and not only we, but the sick also, the children, and the women.

TEIAS. Ah, yes, the women; I had not thought of them.

EURICH. But now, to-morrow we shall arise to battle, and on the second and the third days also, if we hold out so long, until amazement and dismay shall lay hold upon the Byzantine before this prodigy, and upon all the Hunnish and Suevian mob that he trails along after him. — We cannot defeat them, but we can make them harass themselves till they are aweary of our blood. — And when no man of us is left able to hold spear or bow, then the hour will come when the Eunuch will bid them to say unto us, "Withdraw in peace!" — as many of us as are left then — I fear not many.

TEIAS (*laughing out*). Surely not we!

ALL (*with loud laughter*). No, surely not we!

EURICH. These shall then take the women and children in their midst, and with lifted heads and drawn swords go down through the midst of the Byzantine camp toward Naples, to buy a bit of bread. And I tell you the people will stare at them with such terror that not even a Hunnish dog will dare to bark at them. So, through the sacrifice of ourselves, wife and child, at least, may be saved.

TEIAS. Wife and child! Wife and child! What are they to us?

ATHANARICH. King, you scorn what to us is dearest!

TEIAS. That may be! I only know that there were many superfluous mouths of mornings — at rations. Otherwise we might have been able to hold out. One thing more I must say to you, — and I shall enjoin it on the men outside there also, on their oath as soldiers, — let none of the women learn anything of our purpose! I will not have a single man grow slack of will through women's tears and women's cries.

ATHANARICH. Sire, not to bid our wives farewell! What you demand of us is inhuman.

TEIAS. Bid them farewell for aught I care, but be silent about it. Let him who has wife and child here go to the barricade, and let the women give him food and drink,

for they hold in their grip some that has been left too securely in their hands. Let him share it with the unmarried men, and be merry if he can.

EURICH. But how shall they explain this to their wives, sire, since before this you have strictly forbidden any intercourse?

TEIAS. Say it is on account of my wedding, or because the ships are here, if that sounds more credible. Say whatever you like, — only keep the one thing to yourselves!

THEODEMIR. And you, yourself, will you never more see your young wife, king?

TEIAS. What? No, I feel not the slightest desire to. Yes, now I shall speak to the people. I could wish I had your tongue, Theodemir. The thing will be hard for me to do, for I shall have to use big words, and shall not feel them. Come.

[*All go out. Ildibad follows them slowly. The stage remains empty for a while. The king's voice is heard, and it is greeted with acclamation. Then, after some seconds, stifled sounds of woe. Ildibad returns, and crouches down for a moment on a stump near the curtain. Then he lights two torches, which he sticks in the holders; he then gets the king's weapons in readiness. Outside, cries of enthusiasm are raised, and again are stifled. Enter Bishop Agila staggering with exhaustion and excitement.*

ILDIBAD. Will you sit down, reverend sir?

THE BISHOP. And you, are you not going to hear what the king is saying?

ILDIBAD. It does not concern me, reverend sir. The king and I — we two have long been one in action.

THE BISHOP (*to himself*). Verily, he stood there like the angel of death!

ILDIBAD. Whether angel or devil is all one to me.

[*The cries of enthusiasm are raised anew, and approach the tent. Enter the king with blazing eyes, pale, but quiet.*

TEIAS. Are the weapons in readiness? Ah, you are here, Bishop!

THE BISHOP (*putting his hands before his face*). King, my king!

TEIAS. Well, you will now have to seek another flock, Bishop. If you will give me your blessing, I beg you give it quickly. — Tell Theodemir to come to me.

[*Ildibad goes out.*

THE BISHOP. My son, do you feel yourself free from the tremblings of all mortal creatures?

TEIAS. Bishop, I have been a good servant to your church. I could not dedicate temples to her as Totila did, but I have slain for her welfare whatever was to be slain. — Shall I execute any commission to the holy Arius?

THE BISHOP. My son, I do not understand you.

TEIAS. I am sorry, my father.

THE BISHOP. Have you said your farewell?

TEIAS. Farewell — to whom? I would rather cry welcome; but the time is not yet come.

THE BISHOP (*angrily*). I speak of your wife, sire!

TEIAS. At this hour, Bishop, I know only of men, — of women I know nothing. Farewell!

[*Enter Theodemir and Ildibad.*

THE BISHOP. Farewell — and God have mercy on your soul.

TEIAS. I thank you, Bishop. — Ah, there you are, Theodemir!

[*The Bishop goes out. Ildibad remains in the background, occupied with the king's weapons; goes noiselessly in and out during the following.*

TEIAS. What are the warriors doing?

THEODEMIR. Those who have their wives here have gone to the barricade. — They are probably eating and drinking and playing with their children.

TEIAS. You, too, have a wife here?

THEODEMIR. Yes, sire.

TEIAS. And children?

THEODEMIR. Two boys, sire.

TEIAS. And you have not gone?

THEODEMIR. I have awaited your orders, sire.

TEIAS. What is the hour?

THEODEMIR. The ninth, sire.

TEIAS. And what are the men doing who have no appendages — the unmarried men, and those whose wives are not here?

THEODEMIR. They are lying by the fire in silence.

[*Ildibad goes out.*

TEIAS. See to it that something is brought to them. I have commanded that it be done. Will the men sleep?

THEODEMIR. No one will sleep.

TEIAS. About midnight come for me.

THEODEMIR. Yes, sire. [*Starts to go.*

TEIAS (*with dawning anxiousness*). Stay, Theodemir! — You have always been my opponent.

THEODEMIR. I was, sire; but I have not been for a long time.

TEIAS (*stretching out his arms*). Come! (*They hold each other in a close embrace; then they shake hands*) I would like to keep you here, but you must go to your wife. (*Ildibad comes in*) Do not forget that something to eat must be brought to those men who are staring into the fire. They must have something to do. Brooding is not good at such times.

THEODEMIR. Yes, sire. [*Goes out.*

TEIAS. Well, my old man, now we have nothing further to do on this earth. Shall we chat awhile?

ILDIBAD. Sire, if I might beg a favor!

TEIAS. Favors, now? — I believe you want to flatter me, old fellow!

ILDIBAD. Sire, I am old! My arm would grow weary of bearing the spear quicker than would be good for your life, and you must not fall through fault of mine, sire. — Although no one else will sleep, do not think less of me, but let me sleep through these few hours.

TEIAS (*with a new look of anxiousness*). Go, but do not go far away.

ILDIBAD. Sire, I have always lain before your tent like your

dog. In that respect there will be no change on this last night. Have you any commands, sire?

TEIAS. Good-night! [*Ildibad goes out. Teias, left alone, throws himself on his couch, and stares straight ahead of him with a bitter, tired smile. Balthilda enters hesitatingly. She carries in one hand a basket, in which are meat, bread, and fruit; in the other, a gold tankard with wine. She takes a few steps toward the table.*

TEIAS (*drawing himself up*). Who are you?

BALTHILDA (*tonelessly and timidly*). Do you not know me, king?

TEIAS (*rising from his couch*). The torches burn dimly. — I have heard your voice before. — What do you want with me?

BALTHILDA. I am your wife, king.

TEIAS (*after a silence*). And what do you want with me?

BALTHILDA. My mother sent me. I was to bring you food and wine. The others are eating and drinking, and so my mother said — [*She falters.*

TEIAS. How did you get in? Did not the guard forbid your entrance?

BALTHILDA (*drawing herself up*). I am the queen, sire.

TEIAS. Yes, so you are. And Ildibad, what did he say?

BALTHILDA. Your old spear-bearer was lying asleep. I stepped in over him, sire.

TEIAS. I thank you, Balthilda. — I am not hungry. I thank you. (*Silence. Balthilda stands still and looks at him beseechingly*) I see you still wish something of me. Speak, I beg of you!

BALTHILDA. My king, if I return home with my basket full, I shall be made a laughing-stock before all the women. — And the men will say —

TEIAS (*smiling*). Well, what will the men say?

BALTHILDA. He deems his wife so unworthy that — he will not even take food from her hand.

TEIAS (*smiling*). I assure you, Balthilda, on my word, the men have other things to think of. — Well, no matter. —

You shall get no disgrace through me.— Set your basket here. — Have you still much of such things left?

BALTHILDA. Sire, my mother and I — and the women who are with us, have, for two weeks, laid aside the best of our portions — meal and fruit — and until to-day we did not kill the fowls.

TEIAS. You must have been very hungry indeed, sometimes, you women?

BALTHILDA. Oh, it did not hurt us, sire. — We did it for the feast!

TEIAS. Indeed? So you thought we would celebrate to-day with a feast!

BALTHILDA. Well — is it not a feast day, sire?

TEIAS (*is silent and bites his under lip, while inspecting her sidewise*). Will you not sit down, Balthilda? I cannot let you return home just yet! That would be another disgrace, would it not? (*Balthilda is silent and looks down at the ground*) If I should beg you to, would you be glad to remain?

BALTHILDA. Sire, how could a wife be other than glad to remain with her husband?

TEIAS. Do you, then, in your heart, feel that I — am — your — husband?

BALTHILDA. How could I feel otherwise, sire? The Bishop has united us!

TEIAS. And were you glad when he did it?

BALTHILDA. Yes. — No, I was not glad then.

TEIAS. Why not?

BALTHILDA (*with a bright glance up at him*). Perhaps because, because — I was afraid, sire — and I prayed.

TEIAS. What did you pray?

BALTHILDA. That God would grant me, a humble maid, the power to bring to you the happiness you need, and that you would expect of me.

TEIAS. That I — of you — Is that what you prayed for?

BALTHILDA. Sire, may I not hand you the food and the wine?

TEIAS. No, no! — Listen, Balthilda, outside there by the fire are warriors, who are hungry. — I am not hungry.

BALTHILDA. Sire, give them what you will. — Give them everything!

TEIAS. I thank you, Balthilda. (*Lifting the curtain*) Ho there, guard! Come in cautiously, so that you don't waken the old man. — (*Guard enters.*) Here, take this basket of food, and the wine, and share them honestly. — Say your queen sent them.

THE GUARD. May I thank the queen, sire?

[*Teias nods. The guard shakes her hand cordially and goes out.*

TEIAS. Good! Now bring me something to eat!

BALTHILDA (*confused*). Sire, — why do you — mock — me?

TEIAS. Don't you understand me? If you wish to be my wife, you must give me something of my own, not of yours!

BALTHILDA. Is not everything of mine, then, also yours, sire?

TEIAS. H'm! (*Silence. He seizes her hands*) Do not call me "sire," and do not call me "king." Do you not know my name?

BALTHILDA. Teias is your name!

TEIAS. Say it once again!

BALTHILDA (*in a low voice and turning her head away*). Teias!

TEIAS. Is the name so strange to you?

[*Balthilda shakes her head.*

TEIAS. Why do you hesitate, then?

BALTHILDA. Not for that reason, sire! Since I have known that I was to serve you as your wife, I have repeated it often to myself, by day and night. But I have never said it aloud.

TEIAS. And before you knew, what did you think then?

BALTHILDA. Sire, why do you ask?

TEIAS. And why don't you answer?

BALTHILDA. Sire, when I heard of your bloody commands, and that the others grew fearful of you, — I often thought: How unhappy he must be that the fate of the Goths forces him to such deeds!

TEIAS. You thought that? — You thought — ?

BALTHILDA. Sire, was I wrong to think it?

TEIAS. You had never seen my face and you understood me! And those who were about me, the wise men and experienced warriors, they did not understand me! — Who are you, woman? Who taught you to read my heart? You, you alone of all the people —

BALTHILDA. Sire, — I —

TEIAS. They all shuddered, all crept away from me into a corner, muttering — and did not see the way, the only way, by which they might, perhaps, have saved themselves. When the battle-ax lay at their throats they still talked among themselves of compromises. And then in came the sly Greeks, compromised with them and murdered them singly. In this way have the hundred thousands passed away. And I have writhed with grief and rage — I put hope away from me like a bloody rag, and I sprang into the breach with a laugh of scorn. I sowed terror around me, although my heart contracted convulsively in terror before myself. Not once did I become intoxicated with the blood; I have slain, slain, and knew all the time: — It is in vain! [*Overpowered by anguish, he sinks down on a seat and stares straight before him.*

BALTHILDA (*with a timid attempt at a caress*). My poor, dear king! Dear Teias!

TEIAS (*raises his head and looks around him confusedly*). My God, what am I doing? Why do I tell all this to you? You must not despise me because I am so garrulous. — And you must not think that it may perhaps be remorse which forces me to such behavior. — Perhaps I do feel compassion for those who have been sacrificed, but my conscience stands high above it all. — Much higher than my poor Gothic throne. — Do not look at me so! — There is something in your eyes that forces me to lay bare my inmost soul before you. — Who has given you this power over me? — Go home! — No, stay, — stay! I want to tell you something before you go, — very confidentially,

and I must not scream so or the guard will hear it. — Bend your ear down to me. I have never before confessed it to any man, nor considered it possible that I ever could confess it. — I am so jealous; I have been consumed with jealousy as far back as I can remember. Do you know of whom? — Of Totila! — Yes, of Totila in his grave. — They called him the "sunny" Totila, and their desires cling to him still, to this day. — Their eyes shine yet when they even think of him.

BALTHILDA. Oh, sire, how you torment yourself!

TEIAS (*anxiously*). Did you ever see him?

BALTHILDA. Never.

TEIAS. God be thanked! For if you had ever seen him, as I saw him on the morning of the battle in which he fell — with his golden armor, his white horse dancing under him, and his blond curls flowing round him like sunshine. And in face of the enemy he — laughed like a child. — Oh, to die laughing as he died!

BALTHILDA. Sire, it was easy for him! He went away from here, but left to you, as inheritance, his half-ruined kingdom. — How could you laugh under those conditions?

TEIAS (*eagerly*). How could I? — How could I? — How — Oh, that does me good! (*Stretching himself up*) Ah, you do me good!

BALTHILDA. How proud you make me, sire!

TEIAS. But if you had seen him and compared us you would spit at me!

BALTHILDA. I had seen only you, sire, — dear, dear sire! [*Teias looks at her sidewise, shyly and distrustfully; then he walks silently to the left, sinks down before the throne, and hiding his face on the seat weeps bitterly.*

BALTHILDA (*follows him timidly, and kneels down near him*). Teias, dear, if I hurt you, pardon me!

TEIAS (*draws himself up and seizes her arm*). Tell no one of this!

BALTHILDA. What, sire?

TEIAS. That you saw me weep! Swear it to me!

BALTHILDA. I have been told that I am now as a part of your body. — And of your soul also! — Why should I swear?

TEIAS. If you are a part of my body, come nearer to me, so that you will not see my tears.

BALTHILDA. Let me dry them away for you! See, it is for this I am here.

TEIAS. Oh, I feel so happy! — I ought really to perish with shame, for no one ever saw a Goth weep. Even when we buried Totila, we did not weep. — But I am not ashamed. If I only knew why, in one moment, I feel so happy! But — you must not laugh at me.

BALTHILDA. Why should I laugh at you, dear?

TEIAS. I am hungry.

BALTHILDA (*springing up surprised*). Oh, dear! and you have given everything away!

TEIAS. Oh, no indeed! Go over there, will you? (*She goes*) Behind my couch — do you see the fireplace there?

BALTHILDA. Here where the ashes are lying? Yes!

TEIAS. There is a chest standing there; is there not?

BALTHILDA. Yes.

TEIAS. Will you lift the cover?

BALTHILDA. Oh, it is heavy!

TEIAS. Now reach in! Deep, deep! — Ildibad, the old miser, has — well?

BALTHILDA (*disappointed*). A couple of crusts of bread; is that all, sire?

TEIAS. Probably there is not any more.

BALTHILDA. May I not hurry over to the barricade? Perhaps —

TEIAS. Oh, no! — They need their little bit for themselves. — Bring it here! We will share it, brotherly fashion, — will we not? — and then it will do for both of us. Would you like to?

BALTHILDA. Yes! [*She sits down near him.*

TEIAS. Well, give it here! Ah, that tastes good! Does n't it taste good? Ah, but you must eat some too.

BALTHILDA. I was afraid there would not be enough for you.

TEIAS. No, — that is contrary to the agreement! — So. — Doesn't it taste good?

BALTHILDA. Nothing has ever tasted so good to me before.

TEIAS. Please come nearer to me. — I want to get the crumbs from your lap. — So. — Why am I so hungry just at this moment? You see we are now celebrating our wedding feast!

BALTHILDA. And better than the people outside with their meat and wine, — are we not?

TEIAS. Well, did I not tell you so? — But you are not comfortably seated.

BALTHILDA. Yes, I am, — quite comfortably.

TEIAS. Come, stand up! Please stand up!

BALTHILDA (*standing up*). Well?

TEIAS. Sit down up there!

BALTHILDA (*frightened*). On the throne — for God's sake! — how dare I — ?

TEIAS. Are you not the queen?

BALTHILDA (*with decision*). If I must sit there in earnest! But in jest — no!

TEIAS. Oh, the stupid piece of wood! (*He throws the throne over*) At least it shall be good for something! Now lean against it!

BALTHILDA (*beseechingly*). Dear, are you doing right?

TEIAS (*surprised*). No! (*He sets the throne up again, draws her down to her former place, and leans her head against the seat*) So! You are placed more comfortably now. — And we are not sinning against this piece of lumber! What if the Bishop had seen that? — Ha! ha! ha! Wait, I want something more to eat!

BALTHILDA. There, take it!

TEIAS. Keep still, — keep quite still! I will get it for myself! (*He kneels down on the platform near her*) Now I am on my knees before you. — What a variety of things one learns! — You are beautiful! — I never knew my mother!

BALTHILDA. Never knew her?

TEIAS. Nor have I ever had any sisters. — No one! — And I have never played in my life. — I will learn how, now, at last and nevermore!

BALTHILDA. Why at last and nevermore?

TEIAS. Do you ask? Oh! you — you! Ha! ha! ha! Please eat. Take a bite of mine, — so! Obediently! You remember what the Bishop said?

BALTHILDA (*takes a bite, then, springing up*). But don't you want something to drink too?

TEIAS. Oh, yes! Just bring me the milk pot! Bring the milk pot. — You know, the one Ildibad told us of.

BALTHILDA (*who has gone over to the chest*). Is this it?

TEIAS (*rising*). That must be it. But you must drink first.

BALTHILDA. Is that the right way to do?

TEIAS. I don't know; but it shall be all right!

BALTHILDA. Very well, then. (*She drinks, and shudders laughingly*) Phew! that doesn't taste good!

TEIAS. Give it here! (*He drinks in eager draughts*) Again! (*He drinks again*) So! — Are you such a dainty person? — Indeed, then, who are you? And how did you come hither? And what do you really want with me?

BALTHILDA. I want to love you!

TEIAS. You — my wife! You! (*They fly into each other's arms. Softly*) And do you think you might kiss me?

[*Balthilda shakes her head bashfully.*

TEIAS. Why not?

[*Balthilda shakes her head again.*

TEIAS. Then tell me why not?

BALTHILDA. I will whisper it in your ear.

TEIAS. Well?

BALTHILDA. Your beard is all milky.

TEIAS (*wipes his mouth in alarm, then, in feigned anger*). What is the matter with me? Do you not know who I am? — How dare you say to your king that his — say it again! I will have it once more!

BALTHILDA (*laughing*). His beard — is — all milky!

TEIAS (*laughing*). Well, just wait!

[*Enter Ildibad.*

ILDIBAD. Sire, did you call?

[*He stands rigid with astonishment, and then starts to withdraw silently.*

TEIAS (*has suddenly contained himself. He seems as if wakened from a dream. His face and bearing assume their former look of gloomy energy*) Stop! Remain! What is going on outside?

ILDIBAD. The soldiers are returning from the barricade, sire, and the women for the most part accompany them.

TEIAS. Are the leaders gathered together?

ILDIBAD. Yes, sire.

TEIAS. They may wait a few moments longer.

ILDIBAD. Yes, sire.

TEIAS. For I, too, have a wife.

ILDIBAD. Very well, sire.

[*Goes out.*

BALTHILDA. Teias, dear, what is going to happen to you?

TEIAS (*remains standing before her and takes her head in his hands*). It seems to me as if in this hour we had wandered through a whole world of joy and sorrow, hand in hand. It is sinking now — all sinking. I am again the man — I was — no, I am not he. You, however, are above all women, queen among them. — Will you —

BALTHILDA. Sire, what do you desire of me?

TEIAS. You will not plead, and will not scream?

BALTHILDA. No, sire.

TEIAS. Day is approaching; before us stands death.

BALTHILDA. Sire, I do not understand you. No one can assault us, and until the ships come —

TEIAS. The ships will never come.

[*Balthilda strokes her cheeks and then stands motionless.*

TEIAS. We men, however, are going out into the plains to fight.

BALTHILDA. You cannot. — That is impossible.

TEIAS. We must. You are the queen, and do not comprehend that we must?

BALTHILDA. Yes — I — comprehend.

TEIAS. The king fights in the front rank, and we shall never see each other again alive. — Do you comprehend that too?

BALTHILDA. Yes, I comprehend it! —

[*Silence. They look at each other.*

TEIAS. I crave your blessing on the way. (*He sinks on his knees before her; she lays her hands on his head, bends down over him tremblingly, and kisses him on the forehead. He springs up and tears back the curtain*) Come in, whoever is waiting!

[*Enter Amalaberga, Eurich, Bishop Agila, Athanarich, Theodemir and other leaders.*

AMALABERGA. King, I sent my child to you. — I hear you men have somewhat to do. — Give her back to me again.

TEIAS. Here is your child! Take her! (*Amalaberga and Balthilda go out. Teias stares after them, then rouses himself and perceives the Bishop*) Bishop, I acted unkindly toward you last evening. Forgive me, and accept my thanks; for now I, too, know why the Goth loves death. (*Seizes his sword*) Now are you ready? Are the farewells taken?

THEODEMIR. Sire, we have acted contrary to your commands. — Which of our wives guessed it, — which of us told it, cannot be determined. Enough! — they know all.

TEIAS. And they have cried oh and woe?

THEODEMIR. Sire, they have silently given us a kiss on our foreheads as the blessing before death.

TEIAS (*starts. Half to himself*). They too! (*Aloud*) Verily, we are a nation of kings. It is a pity that we should perish! Now come!

[*He strides toward the background. The others follow. Amidst the impetuous cries of the people greeting the king, the curtain falls.*

CURTAIN

THE COURT SINGER

FRANK WEDEKIND

(1864–1918)

Frank Wedekind was born at Hanover, on July 24, 1864, and died at Munich, May, 1918. His father, a physician, had migrated to San Francisco, in 1848, and had there married a woman of some Württemberg family; she was an actress. Having made money in land ventures, Wedekind returned to Hanover, where his son was born.

With a passion for writing, Frank was none the less forced to study law in Munich, but, while there, he threw himself ardently into the company of artists and players, and lived the Bohemian life. In Zurich, to which city he next turned for study, he joined a group calling themselves the "Ulrich-Hutton" circle, devoted to all that was modern in art, and here he met Hartleben and the two Hauptmanns.

His father died in 1888, and Wedekind, having deserted the law, conducted an advertising department for Maggi's Soups, and, having had his experiences furthermore in a circus, now began to squander his money in tasting deep of the life afforded by visits to Paris and London, and by excesses in Munich, all of which dissipation had undoubted effect on him. His fortunes were further replenished by the sale of the family homestead, and, in 1891, having gained his insight into the underworld of morals, he settled in Munich, where he became associated with *Simplicissimus*, under Albert Langen.

The Leipzig Literary Society produced his "Earth Spirit" (1895), "The Tenor" (1899), and "The Love Potion" (1899),

in which he himself played. License proved too much for him, since he was charged with *lèse majesté*, and fled, in consequence, to Paris; but, on advice, he finally gave himself up to the authorities and served his sentence in the fortress of Koenigstein. He was an active participant in the Überbrettl' movement, singing and dancing and writing in the spirit demanded of cabaret audiences. He joined Max Reinhardt in 1904, and, at the Berlin Deutsches Theater, played "Spring's Awakening" (1891), "The Earth Spirit" (1895), and "Hidalla" (1904). In 1906 he married an actress, Tillie Niemann.

The formless brutality of everything written by Wedekind, his bestiality, his disregard for humanity, his loathsome frankness have kept him from being generally read in English. "Spring's Awakening" took him outside the narrow recognition of his circle. If one could stretch a point in reading Wedekind, and forget his bitter satire, overlook his indifferent attitude toward sex relations, as an outcome of his licentiousness; if one could sympathize with his barbaric obliteration of the weak, in his sympathies for the strong, his interest in the abnormal rather than the normal, one might be able to appreciate fully the so-called moral standard which Wedekind contended was his. But interest in sex always obscured such intent; he set out, from early years, to sound iniquity, and he took deep-sea soundings; he strove to measure the temptation of the flesh, and his reckoning was abnormal. As Pollard says, he flayed Yesterday with its superstitious limitations, he loudly anathematized the modern attitude toward children. The lure of sex and the bestiality of sex relations were his self-imposed themes.

Besides his various plays, he wrote novels as well, and a dissertation on "The Art of the Theatre."

In the history of contemporary German drama, Wedekind might, so writes Amelia von Ende, claim to be "not only an uncompromising destroyer of antiquated sentiment, and a fanatic of positive life, but a grim moralist."

But all critics write of Wedekind with guarded praise;

they recognize the value of the adolescent study in "Spring's Awakening"; they praise "Earth Spirit" (1895) and "Pandora's Box" (1904), but they smell the corruptible in Wedekind, without wholly discounting his value. Ludwig Lewisohn's attitude is representative of a large body of critical judgment:

"The man has in him the seeds of a new technique and of a new fashion of dealing with life. And these seeds may, before the merely protesting critic is aware, produce an art which, however repugnant to our immediate tastes, will not permit itself to be neglected."

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Hidalla. 1908.

The Philosopher's Stone. 1909.

At the Last Ditch. 1910.

In allen Wassern gewaschen. 1910. This is the third of a sequence of one-act plays, the other two being, 1st, "Schloss Wetterstein", and 2nd, "Mit allen Hunden gehetzt."

Franziska. 1912.

Simson; oder, Scham und Eifersucht. 1914.

Bismarck. 1915.

Herakles. 1917.

König Nicolo; oder, So ist das Leben. 1911.

THE COURT SINGER

BY FRANK WEDEKIND

TRANSLATED BY

ALBERT WILHELM BOESCHE

Characters

GERARDO, Imperial and Royal Court Singer
MRS. HELEN MAROWA
PROFESSOR DÜHRING
MISS ISABEL COEURNE
MÜLLER, hotel proprietor
A VALET
AN ELEVATOR BOY
A PIANO TEACHER

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THE COURT SINGER

Pretentiously furnished room in a hotel. Entrance from the corridor in the center; also side doors. In front to the right a window with heavy closed curtains. To the left a grand piano. Behind the piano a Japanese screen covering the fireplace. Big open trunks are standing around. Enormous laurel wreaths on several upholstered armchairs. A mass of bouquets are distributed about the room, some of them being piled up on the piano.

VALET (*enters with an armful of clothes from the adjoining room; puts them into one of the big trunks. Knock on the door; he straightens up*). Well? — Come in!

[*Enter an elevator boy.*

BOY. There's a woman downstairs wants to know if Mr. Gerardo is in.

VALET. No, he isn't in. (*Exit elevator boy. Valet goes into the adjoining room; returns with another armful of clothes. Knock on the door. He lays the clothes aside and walks to the door*) Well, who's this now? (*Opens the door, receives three or four large bouquets, comes forward with them and lays them carefully on the piano; then resumes packing. Another knock; he goes to the door, opens it, receives a batch of letters in all varieties of colors, comes forward and examines the addresses*) "Mr. Gerardo." — "Court Singer Gerardo." — "Monsieur Gerardo." — "Gerardo, Esq." — "To the Most Honorable Court Singer Gerardo" — that's from the chambermaid, sure! — "Mr. Gerardo, Imperial and Royal Court Singer."

[*Puts the letters on a tray; then continues packing. Enter Gerardo.*

GERARDO. What, aren't you through with packing yet? — How long does it take you to pack?

VALET. I'll be through in a minute, sir.

GERARDO. Be quick about it. I have some work left to do before I go. Come, let me have a look at things. (*He reaches into one of the trunks*) Great heavens, man! Don't you know how to fold a pair of trousers? (*Takes out the garment in question*) Do you call that packing? Well, I *do* believe, I might teach you a thing or two, though, surely, you ought to be better at this than I! Look here, that's the way to take hold of a pair of trousers. Then hook them here. Next, turn to these two buttons. Watch closely now; it all depends on these two buttons; and then — pull — the trousers straight. There you are! Now finish up by folding them once — like this. That's the way. They won't lose their shape now in a hundred years!

VALET (*quite reverent, with eyes cast down*). Perhaps Mr. Gerardo used to be a tailor once.

GERARDO. What? A tailor, I? Not quite. Simpleton! (*Handing the trousers to him*) There, put them back, but be quick about it.

VALET (*bending down over the trunk*). There's another batch of letters for you, sir.

GERARDO (*walking over to the left*). Yes, I've seen them.

VALET. And flowers!

GERARDO. Yes, yes. (*Takes the letters from the tray and throws himself into an armchair in front of the piano*) Now, for pity's sake, hurry up and get through. (*Valet disappears in adjoining room. Gerardo opens the letters, glances through them with a radiant smile, crumples them up and throws them under his chair. From one of them he reads as follows*) "— To belong to you who to me are a god! To make me infinitely happy for the rest of my life, how little that would cost you! Consider, please, —" (*To himself*) Great heavens! Here I am to sing Tristan in Brussels to-morrow night and don't remember a single note! — Not a single note! (*Looking at his watch*)

Half-past three. — Forty-five minutes left. (*A knock*) Come in!

BOY (*lugging in a basket of champagne*). I was told to put this in Mr. —

GERARDO. *Who* told you? — Who is downstairs?

BOY. I was told to put this in Mr. Gerardo's room.

GERARDO (*rising*). What is it? (*Relieves him of the basket*) Thank you. (*Exit elevator boy. Gerardo lugs basket forward*) For mercy's sake! Now what am I to do with this! (*Reads the name on the giver's card and calls out*) George!

VALET (*enters from the adjoining room with another armful of clothes*). It's the last lot, sir.

[*Distributes them among the various trunks which he then closes.*

GERARDO. Very well. — I am at home to no one!

VALET. I know, sir.

GERARDO. To no one, I say!

VALET. You may depend on me, sir. (*Handing him the trunk keys*) Here are the keys, Mr. Gerardo.

GERARDO (*putting the keys in his pocket*). To *no one!*

VALET. The trunks will be taken down at once.

[*Starts to leave the room.*

GERARDO. Wait a moment.

VALET (*returning*). Yes, sir?

GERARDO (*gives him a tip*). What I said was: to *no one!*

VALET. Thank you very much indeed, sir. [*Exit.*

GERARDO (*alone, looking at his watch*). Half an hour left. (*Picks out the piano arrangement of "Tristan and Isolde" from under the flowers on the piano and, walking up and down, sings mezza voce*)

"Isolde! Beloved! Art thou mine?
Once more my own? May I embrace thee?"

(*Clears his throat, strikes two thirds on the piano and begins anew*)

"Isolde! Beloved! Art thou mine?
Once more my own? —"

(*Clears his throat*) The air is simply infernal in here!

(*Sings*)

"Isolde! Beloved!—"

I feel as if there were a leaden weight on me! I must have a breath of fresh air, quick! (*Goes to the window and tries to find the cord by which to draw the curtain aside*) Where can that thing be? — On the other side. There! (*Draws the curtain aside quickly and, seeing Miss Coeurne before him, throws back his head in a sort of mild despair*) Goodness gracious!

MISS COEURNE (*sixteen years old, short skirts, loose-hanging light hair. Has a bouquet of red roses in her hand, speaks with an English accent, looks at Gerardo with a full and frank expression*). Please, do not send me away.

GERARDO. What else am I to do with you? Heaven knows *I* did not ask you to come here. It would be wrong of you to take it amiss but, you see, I have to sing to-morrow night. I must tell you frankly. I thought I should have this half hour to myself. Only just now I've given special and strictest orders not to admit anybody, no matter who it might be.

MISS COEURNE (*stepping forward*). Do not send me away. I heard you as Tannhäuser last night and came here merely to offer you these roses.

GERARDO. Yes? — Well? — And —?

MISS COEURNE. And myself! — I hope I am saying it right.

GERARDO (*grasps the back of a chair; after a short struggle with himself he shakes his head*). Who are you?

MISS COEURNE. Miss Coeurne.

GERARDO. I see.

MISS COEURNE. I am still quite a simple girl.

GERARDO. I know. But come here, Miss Coeurne. (*Sits down in an armchair and draws her up in front of him*) Let me have a serious talk with you, such as you have never heard before in your young life, but seem to need very much at the present time. Do you think because I am an artist — now don't misunderstand me, please. You are — how old are you?

MISS COEURNE. Twenty-two.

GERARDO. You are sixteen, at most seventeen. You make yourself several years older in order to appear more attractive to me. Well now? You are still quite simple, to be sure. But, as I was going to say, my being an artist certainly does not impose upon me the duty to help you to get over being simple! Don't take it amiss. Well? Why are you looking away now?

MISS COEURNE. I told you I was still very simple because that's the way they like to have young girls here in Germany.

GERARDO. I am not a German, my child, but at the same time —

MISS COEURNE. Well? — I am not so simple, after all.

GERARDO. I am no children's nurse either! That's not the right word, I feel it, for — you are no longer a child, unfortunately?

MISS COEURNE. No! — Unfortunately! — Not now.

GERARDO. But you see, my dear young woman — you have your games of tennis, you have your skating club, you may go bicycling or take mountain trips with your lady friends. You may enjoy yourself swimming or riding on horseback or dancing, whichever you like. I am sure you have everything a young girl could wish for. Then why do you come to me?

MISS COEURNE. Because I hate all of that and because it's such a bore!

GERARDO. You are right; I won't dispute what you say. Indeed, you embarrass me. I myself, I must frankly confess, see something else in life. But, my child, I am a man and I am thirty-six years old. The time will come when you may likewise lay claim to a deeper and fuller life. Get two years older and, I am sure, the right one will turn up for you. Then it will not be necessary for you to come unasked to me, that is to say to one whom you do not know any more intimately than — all Europe knows him — and to conceal yourself behind the window curtains in

order to get a taste of the higher life. (*Pause. Miss Coeurne breathes heavily*) Well? — Let me thank you cordially and sincerely for your roses! (*Presses her hand*) Will you be satisfied with that for to-day?

MISS COEURNE. As old as I am, I never yet gave a thought to a man until I saw you on the stage yesterday as Tannhäuser. — And I will promise you —

GERARDO. Oh, please, child, don't promise me anything. How can a promise you might make at the present time be of any value to me? The disadvantage of it would be entirely yours. You see, my child, the most loving father could not speak more lovingly to you than I. Thank a kind Providence for not having been delivered into some other artist's hands by your indiscretion. (*Presses her hand*) Let it be a lesson to you for the rest of your life and be satisfied with that.

MISS COEURNE (*covering her face with her handkerchief, in an undertone, without tears*). Am I so ugly?

GERARDO. Ugly? — How does that make you ugly? — You are young and indiscreet! (*Rises nervously, walks over to the left, returns, puts his arm around her and takes her hand*) Listen to me, my child! If I have to sing, if I am an artist by profession, how does that make you ugly? What an unreasonable inference: I am ugly, I am ugly. And yet it is the same wherever I go. Think of it! When I've only a few minutes left to catch the train, and to-morrow night it's Tristan —! Do not misunderstand me, but surely, my being a singer does not make it incumbent upon me to affirm the charm of your youthfulness and beauty. Does that make you ugly, my child? Make your appeal to other people who are not as hard pressed as I am. Do you really think it would ever occur to me to say such a thing to you?

MISS COEURNE. To say it? No. But to think it.

GERARDO. Now, Miss Coeurne, let us be reasonable! Do not inquire into my thoughts about you. Really, at this moment they do not concern us in the least. I assure you,

and please take my word for it as an artist, for I could not be more honest to you: I am unfortunately so constituted that I simply cannot bear to see any creature whatsoever suffer, not even the meanest. (*Looking at her critically, but with dignity*) And for you, my child, I am sincerely sorry; I may say that much, after you have so far fought down your maidenly pride as to wait for me here. But please, Miss Coeurne, do take into account the life I have to lead. Just think of the mere question of time! At least two hundred, maybe as many as three hundred, charmingly attractive young girls of your age saw me on the stage yesterday in the part of Tannhäuser. Suppose now every one of these young girls expected as much of me as you do. What in the world would become of my singing? What would become of my voice? Just how could I keep up my profession? (*She sinks into a chair, covers her face and weeps; he sits down on the armrest beside her; bends over her, sympathetically*) It's really sinful of you, my child, to shed tears over being so young. Your whole life is still before you. Be patient. The thought of your youth should make you happy. How glad the rest of us would be — even if one lives the life of an artist like myself — to start over again from the very beginning. Please be not ungrateful for hearing me yesterday. Spare me this disconcerting sequel. Am I to blame for your falling in love with me? You are only one of many. My manager insists on my assuming this august manner on the stage. You see there's more to it than mere singing. I simply *have* to play the part of Tannhäuser that way. Now be good, my child. I have only a few moments left. Let me use them in preparing for to-morrow.

MISS COEURNE (*rises; dries her tears*). I cannot imagine another girl acting like me.

GERARDO (*manœuvering her to the door*). Quite right, my child —

MISS COEURNE (*gently resisting him, sobbing*). At least, not — if —

GERARDO. If my valet were not guarding the door downstairs.

MISS COEURNE (*as above*). — if —

GERARDO. If she is as pretty and charmingly young as you.

MISS COEURNE (*as above*). — if —

GERARDO. If she has heard me just once as Tannhäuser.

MISS COEURNE (*sobbing again violently*). If she is as respectable as I!

GERARDO (*pointing to the grand piano*). Now, before you leave, take a look at those flowers. Let it be a warning to you, if you should ever feel tempted again to fall in love with a singer. Do you see, how fresh they are, all of them? I just let them fade and go to waste or give them to the porter. Then look at these letters. (*Takes a handful from the tray*) I know none of the ladies who have written them; don't you worry. I leave them to their fate. What else can I do? But, you may believe me, every one of your charming young friends is among them.

MISS COEURNE (*pleadingly*). Well, I won't hide myself a second time. — I won't do it again.

GERARDO. Really, my child, I have n't any more time. It's too bad, but I am about to leave town. I told you, did I not, that I am sorry for you? I really am, but my train is scheduled to leave in twenty-five minutes. So what more do you want?

MISS COEURNE. A kiss.

GERARDO (*standing up stiff and straight*). From me?

MISS COEURNE. Yes.

GERARDO (*putting his arm around her, dignified, but sympathetic*). You are desecrating art, my child. Do you really think it's for this that they are willing to pay my weight in gold? Get older first and learn to respect more highly the chaste goddess to whom I devote my life and labor. — You don't know whom I mean?

MISS COEURNE. No.

GERARDO. That's what I thought. Now, in order not to be inhuman, I will present you with my picture. Will

you give me your word that after that you will leave me?

MISS COEURNE. Yes.

GERARDO. Very well, then. (*Walks back of the table to sign one of his photographs*) Why don't you try to interest yourself in the operas themselves rather than in the men on the stage? You may find it to be a higher enjoyment, after all.

MISS COEURNE (*in an undertone*). I am too young.

GERARDO. Sacrifice yourself to music! (*Comes forward and hands her the photograph*) You are too young, but — maybe you'll succeed in spite of that. Do not see in me the famous singer, but the unworthy tool in the hands of a master. Look around among the married women you know; all of them Wagnerians! Study his librettos, learn to feel each leitmotiv. That will keep you from committing indiscretions.

MISS COEURNE. I thank you.

GERARDO (*escorts her out into the hall, rings for the valet in passing through the door. Returns and picks up again the piano arrangement of "Tristan and Isolde"; walks to the right*). Come in!

VALET (*panting and breathless*). Yes, sir? Your orders?

GERARDO. Are you standing at the door downstairs?

VALET. Not at present, sir.

GERARDO. I can see as much — simpleton! But you won't let anybody come up here, will you?

VALET. There were three ladies inquiring about you.

GERARDO. Don't you dare admit anybody, whatever they tell you.

VALET. Then there's another batch of letters.

GERARDO. Yes, never mind. (*Valet puts letters on tray*) Don't you dare admit anybody!

VALET (*at the door*). Very well, sir.

GERARDO. Not even if they should offer you an annuity for life.

VALET. Very well, sir. [*Exit.*

GERARDO (*alone, tries to sing*). "Isolde! Beloved! Art thou —" I should think these women might get tired of me *some* time! But, then, the world holds so many of them! And I am only one. Well, everybody bears his yoke and has to bear it! (*Walks to the piano and strikes two thirds. Professor Dühring, seventy years old, dressed in black, a long, white beard, his aquiline nose tinged with red, suggesting fondness for wine, goldringed spectacles, frock coat and silk hat, carries the score of an opera under his arm, enters without knocking. Gerardo, turning around*) What do you want?

DÜHRING. Mr. Gerardo, I — I have —

GERARDO. How did you get in here?

DÜHRING. I've been watching my chance for two hours down on the sidewalk, Mr. Gerardo.

GERARDO (*recollecting*). Let me see, you are —

DÜHRING. For fully two hours I've been standing down on the sidewalk. What else was I to do?

GERARDO. But, my dear sir, I haven't the time.

DÜHRING. I don't mean to play the whole opera to you now.

GERARDO. I haven't the time left —

DÜHRING. You haven't the time left! How about *me!* You are thirty. You have attained success in your art. You can continue following your bent through the whole long life that still is before you. I will ask you to listen only to your own part in my opera. You promised to do so when you came to town.

GERARDO. It's to no purpose, sir. I am not my own master —

DÜHRING. Please, Mr. Gerardo! Please, please! Look at me, here's an old man lying before you on his knees, who has known only one thing in life: his art. I know what you would reply to me, you, a young man who has been carried aloft on the wings of angels, one might say. "If you would have the goddess of Fortune find you, don't hunt for her." Do you imagine, when one has cherished but a single hope for fifty years, one could possibly have

overlooked any means whatsoever, within human reach, to attain that hope? First one turns cynical and then serious again. One tries to get there by scheming, one is once more a light-hearted child, and again an earnest seeker after one's artistic ideals — not for ambition's sake, not for conviction's sake, but simply because one cannot help it, because it's a curse which has been laid on one by a cruel omnipotence to which the life-long agony of its creature is a pleasing offering! A pleasing offering, I say, for we whom art enthralls rebel against our lot as little as does the slave of a woman against his seductress, as little as does the dog against his master who whips him.

GERARDO (*in despair*). I am powerless —

DÜHRING. Let me tell you, my dear sir, the tyrants of antiquity who, as you know, would have their slaves tortured to death just for a pleasant pastime, they were mere children, they were harmless, innocent little angels as compared with that divine Providence which thought it was creating those tyrants in its own image.

GERARDO. While I quite comprehend you —

DÜHRING (*while Gerardo vainly tries several times to interrupt him; he follows Gerardo through the room and repeatedly blocks his attempt to reach the door*). You do not comprehend me. You cannot comprehend me. How could you have had the time to comprehend me! Fifty years of fruitless labor, sir, that is more than you can comprehend, if one has been a favorite child of fortune like you. But I'll try to make you realize it approximately, at least. You see, I am too old to take my own life. The proper time to do that is at twenty-five, and I have missed my opportunity. I must live out my life now, my hand has grown too unsteady. But would you know what an old man like me *will* do? You ask me how I got in here. You have put your valet on guard at the hotel entrance. I did not try to slip by him; I 've known for fifty years what he will tell me: the gentleman is not in. But with my score here I stood at the corner of the building for two hours in the rain until

he went up for a moment. Then I followed him, and, while you were speaking to him in here, I concealed myself on the staircase — I need not tell you where. And then, when he had gone down again, I entered here. That's what a man of my years will do to reach one who might be his grandson. Please, sir, please, let not this moment be without result for me even though it cost you a day, even though it cost you a whole week. It will be to your advantage as well as mine. A week ago, when you came to town on your starring tour, you promised me to let me play my opera to you; and since that time I've called every day. You either were rehearsing or had lady visitors. And now you are about to depart, which would mean that an old man like me in vain spent a whole week standing around in the street! And all it would cost you is a single word: "I will sing your *Hermann*." Then my opera will be performed. Then you will thank God for my intrusiveness, for — you sing "Siegfried", you sing "Florestan" — but you haven't in your repertory a more grateful part, one more adapted to a singer of your resources than that of *Hermann*. Then with loud acclaim they will draw me out of my obscurity, and perhaps I'll have the opportunity of giving to the world at least a part of what I might have given, if it had not cast me out like a leper. But the great material gain resulting from my long struggle will not be mine, you alone will —

GERARDO (*having given up the attempt to stop his visitor, leans on the mantelpiece of the fireplace. While drumming on the marble slab with his right hand, something behind the screen seems to excite his curiosity. He investigates, then suddenly reaches out and draws a piano teacher forward, dressed in gray. Holding her by the collar, with outstretched arm, he thus leads her forward in front of the piano and out through the center door. Having locked the door, to Dühring*). Please, don't let this interrupt you!

DÜHRING. You see, there are performed ten new operas every year which become impossible after the second

night, and every ten years a good one which lives. Now this opera of mine *is* a good one, it is well adapted for the stage, it is sure to be a financial success. If you let me, I'll show you letters from Liszt, from Wagner, from Rubinstein, in which these men look up to me as to a superior being. And why has it remained unperformed to the present day? Because I don't stand in the public market-place. I tell you, it's like what will happen to a young girl who for three years has been the reigning beauty at all dancing parties, but has forgotten to become engaged. One has to give way to another generation. Besides, you know our Court theaters. They are fortresses, I can assure you, compared with which the armor-plate of Metz and Rastadt is the merest tin. They would rather dig out ten corpses than admit a single living composer. And it's in getting over these ramparts that I ask you to lend me a hand. You are inside at thirty, I am outside at seventy. It would cost you just a word to let me in, while I am vainly battering my head against stone and steel. That's why I have come to you (*very passionately*), and if you are not absolutely inhuman, if your success has not killed off in you the very last trace of sympathy with striving fellow-artists, you cannot refuse my request.

GERARDO. I will let you know a week from now. I will play your opera through. Let me take it along.

DÜHRING. I am too old for that, Mr. Gerardo. Long before a week, as measured by your chronology, has elapsed, I shall lie beneath the sod. I 've been put off that way too often. (*Bringing down his fist on the piano*) *Hic Rhodus! Hic salta!* It's five years ago now that I called on the manager of the Royal Theater, Count Zedlitz: "What have you got for me, my dearest professor?" "An opera, your Excellency." "Indeed, you have written a new opera? Splendid!" "Your Excellency, I have not written a new opera. It 's an old opera. I wrote it thirteen years ago." — It wasn't this one here, it was my *Maria de Medicis*. — "But why don't you let us have it then?

Why, we are just hunting for new works. We simply cannot shuffle through any longer, turning the old ones over and over. My secretary is traveling from one theater to another, without finding anything, and you, who live right here, withhold your production from us in proud disdain of the common crowd!" "Your Excellency," I replied, "I am not withholding anything from anybody, Heaven is my witness. I submitted this opera to your predecessor, Count Tornow, thirteen years ago, and had to go to his office myself three years later to get it back. Nobody had as much as looked at it." "Now just leave it here, my dear professor. A week from now at the latest you'll have our answer." And, in saying this, he pulls the score from under my arm, and claps it into the lowest drawer, and that's where it is lying to-day! That's where it is lying to-day, sir! But what could I do, child that I am in spite of my white hair, but go home and tell my Gretchen: "They need a new opera here at our theater. Mine is practically accepted now!" A year later death took her away from me, — and she was the one friend left who had been with me when I began to work on it.

[*Sobs and dries his tears.*

GERARDO. Sir, I cannot but feel the deepest sympathy for you —

DÜHRING. That's where it is lying to-day.

GERARDO. Maybe you actually are a child in spite of your white hair. I must confess I doubt if I can help you.

DÜHRING (*in violent rage*). So you can endure the sight of an old man dragging himself along beside you on the same path on which your victorious flight carries you to the sun! Who knows but to-morrow you will lie on your knees before me and boast of knowing me, and to-day you see in the agonized groan of a creative artist nothing but a sad mistake, and you cannot wring from your greed of gold the half hour it would take to rid me of the chains that are crushing me.

GERARDO. Sit down and play, sir! Come!

DÜHRING (*sits down at the piano, opens his score, and strikes two chords*). No, that's not the way it reads. I have to get back into it first. (*Strikes three chords, then turns several leaves*) That is the overture; I won't detain you with it. — Now here comes the first scene. — (*Strikes two chords*) Here you stand at the deathbed of your father. Just a moment until I get my bearings —

GERARDO. Perhaps all you say is quite true. But at any rate you misjudge my position.

DÜHRING (*plays a confused orchestration and sings in a deep grating voice*).

"Alas, now death has come to the castle
As it is raging in our huts.
It moweth down both great and small —"

(*Interrupting himself*) No, that's the chorus. I had thought of playing it to you because it's very good. Now comes your turn. (*Resumes the accompaniment and sings hoarsely*)

"My life unto this fateful hour
Was dim and gray like the breaking morn.
Tortured by demons, I roamed about.
My eye is tearless!
Oh, let me kiss once more thy hoary hair!'

(*Interrupting himself*) Well? (*Since Gerardo does not answer, with violent irritation*) These anæmic, threadbare, plodding, would-be geniuses who are puffing themselves up to-day! Whose technic is so sublime, it makes them sterile, impotent at twenty! Meistersingers, philistines, that's what they are, whether they are starving or basking in the public favor. Fellows that go to the cookbook rather than to nature to satisfy their hunger. They think, indeed, they've learned her secret — naïveté! Ha — ha! — Tastes like plated brass! — They make art their starting-point, rather than life! Write music for musicians rather than for yearning mankind! Blind,

benighted ephemerons! Senile youths whom the sun of Wagner has dried and shriveled up! (*Seizing Gerardo's arm violently*) To judge a man's creative genius, do you know where I take hold of him first?

GERARDO (*stepping back*). Well?

DÜHRING (*putting his right hand around his own left wrist and feeling his pulse*). This is where I take hold of him first of all. Do you see, right here! And if he has n't anything here — please, let me go on playing. (*Turning more leaves*) I won't go through the whole monologue. We should n't have the time anyway. Now here, scene three, end of the first act. That's where the farm laborer's child, who had grown up with you in the castle, suddenly enters. Now listen — after you have taken leave of your highly revered mother. (*Rapidly reading the text*) "Demon, who art thou? May one enter?" (*To Gerardo*) Those words are hers, you understand. (*Continues reading*) "Barbette! Yes, it is I. Is your father dead? There he lies!" (*Plays and sings in the highest falsetto*)

"Full often did he stroke my curls.
Wherever he met me he was kind to me.
Alas, this is death.
His eyes are closed — "

(*Interrupting himself, looking at Gerardo with self-assurance*) Now, is n't that music?

GERARDO. Possibly.

DÜHRING (*striking two chords*). Is n't that something more than the *Trumpeter of Säkkingen?*

GERARDO. Your confidence compels me to be candid. I cannot imagine how I could use my influence with any benefit to you.

DÜHRING. In other words, you mean to tell me that it is antiquated music.

GERARDO. I would much rather call it modern music.

DÜHRING. Or modern music. Pardon my slip of the tongue, Mr. Gerardo. It's what will happen when one gets old. You see, one manager will write me: We cannot use your

opera, it is antiquated music — and another writes: We cannot use it because it is modern music. In plain language both mean the same: We don't want any opera of yours, because as a composer *you don't count.*

GERARDO. I am a Wagner singer, sir, I am no critic. If you want to see your opera performed, you had better apply to those who are paid for knowing what is good and what is bad. My judgment in such matters, don't doubt that for a moment, sir, counts the less, the more I am recognized and esteemed as a singer.

DÜHRING. My dear Mr. Gerardo, you may rest assured, I don't believe in your judgment either. What do I care for your judgment! I think I know what to expect of a tenor. I am playing this opera to you to make you say: I 'll sing your *Hermann!* I 'll sing your *Hermann!*

GERARDO. It won't avail you anything. I must do what I am asked to do; I am bound by my contracts. You can afford to stand down in the street for a week. A day more or less makes no difference to you. But if *I* do not leave here by the next train, my prospects in this world are ruined. Maybe, in another world they will engage singers who break their contracts! My chains are drawn more tightly than the harness of a carriage horse. If anybody, even an absolute stranger, asks me for material assistance, he will find I have an open hand, although the sacrifice of happiness my calling exacts of me is not paid for with five hundred thousand francs a year. But if you ask of me the slightest assertion of personal liberty, you are expecting too much of a slave such as I am. I *cannot* sing your *Hermann* as long as you don't count as a composer.

DÜHRING. Please, sir, let me continue. It will give you a desire for the part.

GERARDO. If you but knew, sir, how often I have a desire for things which I must deny myself, and how often I must assume burdens for which I have not the least desire! I have absolutely no choice in the matter. You have been

a free man all your life. How can you complain of not being in the market? Why don't you go and put yourself in the market?

DÜHRING. Oh, the haggling — the shouting — the meanness you meet with! I have tried it a hundred times.

GERARDO. One must do what one is capable of doing, and not what one is incapable of doing.

DÜHRING. Everything has to be learned first.

GERARDO. One must learn that which one is capable of learning. How am I to know if the case is not very much the same with your work as a composer.

DÜHRING. I *am* a composer, Mr. Gerardo.

GERARDO. You mean by that, you have devoted your whole strength to the writing of operas.

DÜHRING. Quite so.

GERARDO. And you hadn't any left to bring about a performance.

DÜHRING. Quite so.

GERARDO. The composers whom I know go about it just the other way. They slap their operas on paper the best way they know and keep their strength for bringing about a performance.

DÜHRING. They are a type of composer I don't envy.

GERARDO. They would reciprocate that feeling, sir. These people do count. One must be *something*. Name me a single famous man who did not *count!* If one is not a composer, one is something else, that's all, and there's no need of being unhappy about it, either. I was something else myself before I became a Wagner singer — something, my efficiency at which nobody could doubt, and with which I was entirely satisfied. It is not for *us* to say what we are intended for in this world. If it were, any Tom, Dick or Harry might come along! Do you know what I was before they discovered me? I was a paper-hanger's apprentice. Do you know what that is like? (*Indicating by gesture*) I put paper on walls — with paste. I don't conceal my humble origin from anybody. Now just

imagine, that as a paper-hanger I should have taken it into my head to become a Wagner singer! Do you know what they would have done to me?

DÜHRING. They would have sent you to the madhouse.

GERARDO. Exactly, and rightly so. Whoever is dissatisfied with what he is will not get anywhere as long as he lives. A healthy man does that at which he is successful; if he fails, he chooses another calling. You spoke of the judgment of your friends. It does not take much to obtain expressions of approbation and admiration which do not cost those anything who utter them. Since my fifteenth year I have been paid for every labor I've performed, and should have considered it a disgrace to be compelled to do something for nothing. Fifty years of fruitless struggling! Can anybody be so stubborn as not to have that convince him of the impossibility of his dreams! What did you get out of your life? You have sinfully wasted it! I have never striven for anything out of the ordinary; but, sir, I can assure you of one thing: that since my earliest childhood days I have never had enough time left to stand out in the street for a whole week. And if I were to think that in my old days I might be compelled to do that very thing — sir, I am speaking only for myself now — but I cannot imagine how I could still muster the courage to look people in the face.

DÜHRING. What? With such an opera in your hands! Remember, I am not doing it for my own sake; I am doing it for art's sake.

GERARDO. You overestimate art. Let me tell you that art is something quite different from what people make themselves believe about it.

DÜHRING. I know nothing higher on earth!

GERARDO. That's a view shared only by people like yourself to whose interest it is to make this view prevail generally. We artists are merely one of bourgeoisie's luxuries in paying for which they will outbid each other. If you were right, how would an opera like *Walküre* be possible,

which deals with things the exposure of which is absolutely abhorrent to the public. Yet when *I* sing the part of *Siegmund*, the most solicitous mothers will not hesitate to bring in their thirteen- or fourteen-year-old daughters. And indeed, as I am standing on the stage, I know for certain that not one person in the audience any longer pays the slightest attention to the action itself. If they did they would get up and out. That's what they actually did when the opera was still new. Now they have accustomed themselves to ignoring it. They notice it as little as they notice the air separating them from the stage. That, you see, is the meaning of what you call art! To this you have sacrificed fifty years of your life! Our real duty as artists is to produce ourselves to the paying public night after night under one pretense or another. Nor is its interest limited to such exhibitions; it fastens itself as tenaciously upon our private life. One belongs to the public with every breath one draws; and because we submit to this for money, people never know which they had better do most, idolize us or despise us. Go and find out how many went to the theater yesterday to hear me sing, and how many came to gape at me as they would gape at the Emperor of China if he were to come to town to-morrow. Do you know what the public is after in its pursuit of art? To shout bravos, to throw flowers and wreaths upon the stage, to have something to talk about, to be seen by others, to say Ah and Oh, once in a while to take a hand in unhitching a performer's horses — these are the public's real wants, and I satisfy them. If they pay me half a million, I in return furnish a living to a legion of cabmen, writers, milliners, florists, tavern-keepers. The money is made to circulate. People's blood is made to circulate. Young girls become engaged, old maids get married, wives fall victims to their husbands' friends, and grandmothers get no end of topics for gossip. Accidents and crimes are made to happen. At the ticket-office a child is trampled to death, a lady is robbed of her pocketbook, a gentleman

in the audience becomes insane during a performance. That creates business for physicians, lawyers — (*he is seized by a fit of coughing*) And to think in this condition I am to sing Tristan to-morrow! — I am not telling you these things out of vanity but to cure you of your delusion. The standard by which to judge a man's importance in this world is the world itself and not some fixed conviction one may have acquired through years of brooding meditation. I did not put myself in the market either; they discovered me. There are no unappreciated, neglected geniuses. We are not the makers and masters of our own fate; man is born a slave!

DÜHRING (*who has been turning the leaves of his manuscript*). Please, before I go, let me play to you the first scene of the second act. It's laid in a park, you know, just like the famous picture: *Embarquement pour Cythère* —

GERARDO. But I told you I haven't the time! Besides, what am I to gather from a few detached scenes?

DÜHRING (*slowly packing up his manuscript*). I am afraid, Mr. Gerardo, you are somewhat misjudging me. After all, I am not quite so unknown to the rest of the world as I am to you. My person and name are known. Wagner himself mentions me often enough in his writings. And let me tell you, if I die to-day, my works will be performed to-morrow. I am as sure of that as I know that my music will retain its value. My Berlin publisher writes me every day: All that's needed is for you to die. Why then in the world don't you?

GERARDO. All I can reply to you is this: that since Wagner's death there hasn't been a call for new operas anywhere. If you offer new music, you have all conservatories, all singers, and the whole public against you from the start. If you want to see your works performed, write a music which does not differ the least from what is in vogue to-day; just copy; steal your opera in bits and scraps from the whole of Wagner's operas. Then you may count with considerable probability on having it accepted. My

tremendous hit last night should prove to you that the old music is all that's needed for years to come. And my opinion is that of every other singer, of every manager, and of the whole paying public. Why should I go out of my way to have a new music whipped into me when the old music has already cost me such inhuman whippings?

DÜHRING (*offers him his trembling hand*). I am sorry, but I fear I 'm too old to learn to steal. That 's the kind of thing one has to begin young or one will never learn.

GERARDO. I hope I haven't offended you, sir. — But, my dear sir, — if you would permit me — the thought that life means a hard struggle to you — (*speaking very rapidly*) it so happens that I have received five hundred marks more than I —

DÜHRING (*looks at Gerardo with his eyes wide open; then suddenly starts for the door*). Please, please, I beg of you, no! Don't finish what you meant to say. No, no, no! That is not what I came for. You know what a great sage has said: — They are all of them good-natured, but —! — No, Mr. Gerardo, I did not ask you to listen to my opera in order to practice extortion on you. I love my child too much for that. No indeed, Mr. Gerardo —

[*Exit through the center door.*

GERARDO (*escorting him to the door*). Oh, please, sir. — Happy to have known you, sir. (*Gerardo alone, comes forward, sinks into an armchair, with basket of champagne in front of him; looks at the bottles*) For whom am I raking together so much money? — For my children? Yes, if I had any children! — For my old age? — Two more years will make a wreck of me! — Then it will be:

"Alas, alas,
The hobby is forgotten!"

HELEN (*of striking beauty, twenty-seven years, street dress, muff, enters, greatly excited*). I am just likely, am I not, to let that creature block my way! I suppose you placed him down there to prevent me from reaching you!

GERARDO (*has started from his chair*). Helen!

HELEN. Why, you knew that I was coming, didn't you?

VALET (*in the open door which has been left so by Helen; holds hand to his cheek*). I did my very best, sir, but the lady — she — she —

HELEN. Boxed your ears!

GERARDO. Helen!

HELEN. Would you expect me to put up with such an insult?

GERARDO (*to the valet*). You may go. [*Exit valet.*

HELEN (*lays her muff on a chair*). I can no longer live without you. Either you will take me along or I shall kill myself.

GERARDO. Helen!

HELEN. I shall kill myself! You cut asunder my vital nerve if you insist on our separation. You leave me without either heart or brain. To live through another day like yesterday, a whole day without seeing you, — I simply cannot do it. I am not strong enough for it. I implore you, Oscar, take me along! I am pleading for my life!

GERARDO. It is impossible.

HELEN. Nothing is impossible if you are but willing! How can you say it is impossible? It *is* impossible for you to leave me without killing me. These are no empty words, I do not mean it as a threat; it is the simple truth! I am as certain of it as I can feel my own heart in here: not to have you means death to me. Therefore take me along. If not for my sake, do it for human mercy's sake! Let it be for only a short time, I don't care.

GERARDO. I give you my word of honor, Helen, I cannot do it. — I give you my word of honor.

HELEN. You must do it, Oscar! Whether you can or not, you must bear the consequences of your own acts. My life is dear to me, but you and my life are one. Take me with you, Oscar, unless you want to shed my blood!

GERARDO. Do you remember what I told you the very first day within these four walls?

HELEN. I do. But of what good is that to me now?

GERARDO. That there could be no thought of any real sentiment in our relations?

HELEN. Of what good is that to me now? Did I know you then? Why, I did not know what a man could be like until I knew you! You foresaw it would come to this or you would not have begun by exacting from me that promise not to make a scene at your departure. Besides, do you think there is anything I should not have promised you if you had asked me to? That promise means my death. You will have cheated me out of my life if you go and leave me!

GERARDO. I cannot take you with me!

HELEN. Good heavens, didn't I know that you would say that! Didn't I know before coming here! It's such a matter of course! You tell every one of them so. And why am I better than they! I am one of a hundred. There are a million women as good as I. I needn't be told, I *know*. — But I am ill, Oscar! I am sick unto death! I am love-sick! I am nearer to death than to life! That is your work, and you can save me without sacrificing anything, without assuming a burden. Tell me, why can you not?

GERARDO (*emphasizing every word*). Because my contract does not allow me either to marry or to travel in the company of ladies.

HELEN (*perplexed*). What is to prevent you?

GERARDO. My contract.

HELEN. You are not allowed to —?

GERARDO. I am not allowed to marry until my contract has expired.

HELEN. And you are not allowed to —?

GERARDO. I am not allowed to travel in the company of ladies.

HELEN. That's incomprehensible to me. Whom in the world does it concern?

GERARDO. It concerns my manager.

HELEN. Your manager? — What business is it of his?

GERARDO. It is his *business*.

HELEN. Perhaps because it might affect your voice?

GERARDO. Yes.

HELEN. Why, that 's childish! — *Does* it affect your voice?

GERARDO. It does not.

HELEN. Does your manager believe such nonsense?

GERARDO. No, he does not believe it.

HELEN. That's incomprehensible to me. I don't understand how a — respectable man can sign such a contract!

GERARDO. My rights as a man are only a secondary consideration. I am an artist in the first place.

HELEN. Yes, you are. A great artist! An eminent artist! Don't you comprehend how I must love you? Is that the only thing your great mind cannot comprehend? All that makes me appear contemptible now in my relation to you is due to just this, that I see in you the only man who has ever made me feel his superiority to me and whom it has been my sole thought to win. I have clenched my teeth to keep from betraying to you what you are to me for fear you might weary of me. But my experience of yesterday has left me in a state of mind which no woman can endure. If I did not love you so madly, Oscar, you would think more of me. That is so terrible in you that you must despise the woman whose whole world you are. Of what I formerly was to myself there is not a trace left. And now that your passion has left me a burned-out shell, would you leave me here? You are taking my life with you, Oscar! Then take with you as well this flesh and blood which has been yours, or it will perish!

GERARDO. Helen!

HELEN. Contracts! What are contracts to you! Why, there 's not a contract made that one cannot get around in some way! What do people make contracts for? Don't use your contract as a weapon with which to murder me. I am not afraid of your contracts! Let me go with you, Oscar! We 'll see if he as much as mentions a breach of contract. He won't do it or I am a poor judge of

human nature. And if he does object, it will still be time for me to die.

GERARDO. But we have no right to possess each other, Helen! You are as little free to follow me as I am to assume such a responsibility. I do not belong to myself; I belong to my art.

HELEN. Oh, don't talk to me of your art! What do I care for your art! I've clung to your art merely to attract your attention. Did Heaven create a man like you to let you make a clown of yourself night after night? Are you not ashamed of boasting of it? You see that I am willing to overlook your being an artist. What would n't one overlook in a demigod like you? And if you were a convict, Oscar, I could not feel differently toward you. I have lost all control over myself! I should still lie in the dust before you as I am doing now! I should still implore your mercy as I am doing now! My own self would still be abandoned to you as it is now! I should still be facing death as I am now!

GERARDO (*laughing*). Why, Helen, you and facing death! Women so richly endowed for the enjoyment of life as you are do not kill themselves. You know the value of life better than I. You are too happily constituted to cast it away. That is left for others to do — for stunted and dwarfed creatures, the stepchildren of nature.

HELEN. Oscar, I did not say that I was going to shoot myself. When did I say that? How could I summon the courage? I say that I shall die if you do not take me with you, just as one might die of any ailment, because I can live only if I am with you! I can live without anything else — without home, without children, but not without you, Oscar! I can *not* live without *you!*

GERARDO (*uneasy*). Helen — if you do not calm yourself now, you will force me to do something terrible! I have just ten minutes left. The scene you are making here won't be accepted as a legal excuse for my breaking my contract! No court would regard your excited state of

mind as a sufficient justification. I have ten more minutes to give you. If by that time you have not calmed yourself, Helen — then I cannot leave you to yourself!

HELEN. Oh, let the whole world see me lie here!

GERARDO. Consider what you will risk!

HELEN. As if I had anything left to risk!

GERARDO. You might lose your social position.

HELEN. All I can lose is you!

GERARDO. What about those to whom you belong?

HELEN. I can now belong to no one but you!

GERARDO. But I do not belong to you!

HELEN. I've nothing left to lose but life itself.

GERARDO. How about your children?

HELEN (*flaring up*). Who took me away from them, Oscar! Who robbed my children of their mother!

GERARDO. Did I make advances to *you?*

HELEN (*with intense passion*). No, no! Don't think that for a moment! I just threw myself at you and should throw myself at you again to-day! No husband, no children could restrain me! If I die, I have at least tasted life! Through you, Oscar! I owe it to you that I have come to know myself! I have to thank you for it, Oscar!

GERARDO. Helen — now listen to me calmly.

HELEN. Yes, yes — there are ten minutes left.

GERARDO. Listen to me calmly.

[*Both sit down on the sofa.*

HELEN (*staring at him*). I have to thank you for it —

GERARDO. Helen —

HELEN. I don't ask you to love me. If I may but breathe the same air with you — !

GERARDO (*struggling to preserve his composure*). Helen — to a man like me the conventional rules of life cannot be applied. I have known society women in all the lands of Europe. They have made me scenes, too, when it was time for me to leave — but when it came to choosing, I always knew what I owed to my position. Never yet have I met with such an outburst of passion as yours. Helen — I

am tempted every day to withdraw to some idyllic Arcadia with this or that woman. But one has his duty to perform; you as well as I; and duty is the highest law —

HELEN. I think I know better by this time, Oscar, what is the highest law.

GERARDO. Well, what is it? Not your love, I hope? That's what every woman says! Whatever a woman wants to carry through she calls good, and if anybody refuses to yield to her then he is bad. That's what our fool playwrights have done for us. In order to draw full houses they put the world upside down and call it great-souled if a woman sacrifices her children and her family to indulge her senses. I should like to live like a turtle-dove, too. But as long as I have been in this world I have first obeyed my duty. If after that the opportunity offered, then, to be sure, I've enjoyed life to the full. But if one does not follow one's duty, one has no right to make the least claims on others.

HELEN (*looking away; abstractedly*). That will not bring the dead to life again.

GERARDO (*nervously*). Why, Helen, don't you see, I want to give back your life to you! I want to give back to you what you have sacrificed to me. Take it, I implore you! Don't make more of it than it is! Helen, how can a woman so disgracefully humiliate herself! What has become of your pride? With what contempt would you have shown me my proper place if I had fallen in love with you, if it had occurred to me to be jealous! What am I in the eyes of the society in which you move? A man who makes a clown of himself! Would you fling away your life for a man whom a hundred women have loved before you, whom a hundred women will love after you, without allowing it to cause them a moment of distress? Do you want your flowing blood to make you ridiculous in the sight of God and man?

HELEN (*looking away*). I know very well that I am asking an unheard-of thing of you but — what else can I do?

GERARDO (*soothingly*). I have given you all that's in my power to give. Even to a princess I could not be more than I have been to you. If there is one thing further our relations, if continued, might mean to you, it could only be the utter ruin of your life. Now release me, Helen! I understand how hard you find it, but — one often fears one is going to die. I myself often tremble for my life — art as a profession is so likely to unstring one's nerves. It's astonishing how soon one will get over that kind of thing. Resign yourself to the fortuitousness of life. We did not seek one another because we loved each other; we loved each other because we happened to find one another! (*Shrugging his shoulders*) You say I must bear the consequences of my acts, Helen. Would you in all seriousness think ill of me now for not refusing you admittance when you came under the pretext of having me pass on your voice? I dare say you think too highly of your personal advantages for that; you know yourself too well; you are too proud of your beauty. Tell me, were you not absolutely certain of victory when you came?

HELEN (*looking away*). Oh, what was I a week ago! And what — what am I now!

GERARDO (*in a matter-of-fact way*) Helen, ask yourself this question: What choice is left to a man in such a case? You are generally known as the most beautiful woman in this city. Now shall I, an artist, allow myself to acquire the reputation of an unsociable lout who shuts himself up in his four walls and denies himself to all visitors? The second possibility would be to receive you while at the same time pretending not to understand you. That would give me the wholly undeserved reputation of a simpleton. Third possibility — but this is extremely dangerous — I explain to you calmly and politely the very thing I am saying to you now. But that is very dangerous. For apart from your immediately giving me an insulting reply, calling me a vain, conceited fool, it would, if it became known, make me appear in a most curious light. And

what would at best be the result of my refusing the honor offered me? That you would make of me a contemptible, helpless puppet, a target for your feminine wit, a booby whom you could tease and taunt as much as you liked, whom you could torment and put on the rack until you had driven him mad. (*He has risen from the sofa*) Say yourself, Helen; what choice was left to me? (*She stares at him, then turns her eyes about helplessly, shudders and struggles for an answer*) In such a case I face just this alternative: — to make an enemy who despises me or — to make an enemy who at least respects me. And (*stroking her hair*) Helen! — one does not care to be despised by a woman of such universally recognized beauty. Now, does your pride still permit you to ask me to take you with me?

HELEN (*weeping profusely*). Oh God, oh God, oh God, oh God —

GERARDO. Your social position gave you the opportunity to make advances to me. You availed yourself of it. — I am the last person to think ill of you for that. But no more should you think ill of me for wishing to maintain my rights. No man could be franker with a woman than I have been with you. I told you that there could be no thought of any sentimentalities between you and me. I told you that my profession prevented me from binding myself. I told you that my engagement in this city would end to-day —

HELEN (*rising*). Oh, how my head rings! It's just words, words, words I hear! But I (*putting her hands to her heart and throat*) am choking here and choking here! Oscar — matters are worse than you realize! A woman such as I am more or less in the world — I have given life to two children. What would you say, Oscar — what would you say if to-morrow I should go and make another man as happy as you have been with me? What would you say then, Oscar? — Speak! — Speak!

GERARDO. What should I say? Just nothing. (*Looking at his watch*) Helen —

HELEN. Oscar! — (*On her knees*) I am imploring you for my life! For my life! It's the last time I shall ask you for it! Demand anything of me! But not that! Don't ask my life! You don't know what you are doing! You are mad! You are beside yourself! It's the last time! You detest me because I love you! Let not these minutes pass! — Save me! Save me!

GERARDO (*pulls her up in spite of her*). Now listen to a kind word! — Listen to a — kind— word —

HELEN (*in an undertone*). So it must be!

GERARDO. Helen — how old are your children?

HELEN. One is six and the other four.

GERARDO. Both girls?

HELEN. No.

GERARDO. The one four years old is a boy?

HELEN. Yes.

GERARDO. And the younger one a girl?

HELEN. No.

GERARDO. Both boys?

HELEN. Yes.

GERARDO. Have you no pity for them?

HELEN. No.

GERARDO. How happy I should be if they were mine! — Helen — would you give them to me?

HELEN. Yes.

GERARDO (*half jokingly*). Suppose I should be as unreasonable as you — taking it into my head that I am in love with some particular woman and can love no other! I cannot marry her. I cannot take her with me. Yet I must leave. Just what would that lead me to?

HELEN (*from now on growing constantly calmer*). Yes, yes. — Certainly. — I understand.

GERARDO. Believe me, Helen, there are any number of men in this world like me. The very way you and I have met ought to teach you something. You say you cannot live without me. How many men do you know? The more you will come to know the lower you will rate them. Then

you won't think again of taking your life for a man's sake. You will have no higher opinion of them than I have of women.

HELEN. You think I am just like you. I am not.

GERARDO. I am quite serious, Helen. Nobody loves just one particular person unless he does not know any other. Everybody loves his own kind and can find it anywhere when he has once learned how to go about it.

HELEN (*smiling*). And when one has met one's kind, one is always sure of having one's love returned?

GERARDO (*drawing her down on the sofa*). You have no right, Helen, to complain of your husband! Why did you not know yourself better? Every young girl is free to choose for herself. There is no power on earth that could compel a girl to belong to a man whom she doesn't like. No such violence can be done to woman's rights. That's a kind of nonsense those women would like to make the world believe who, having sold themselves for some material advantage or other, would prefer to escape their obligations.

HELEN (*smiling*). Which would be a breach of contract, I suppose.

GERARDO. If *I* sell myself, they are at least dealing with an honest man!

HELEN (*smiling*). Then one who loves is not honest?

GERARDO. No! — Love is a distinctly philistine virtue. Love is sought by those who do not venture out into the world, who fear a comparison with others, who haven't the courage to face a fair trial of strength. Love is sought by every miserable rhymester who cannot live without being idolized by some one. Love is sought by the peasant who yokes his wife together with his ox to his plow. Love is a refuge for mollycoddles and cowards! — In the great world in which I live everybody is recognized for what he is actually worth. If two join together, they know exactly what to think of one another and need no love for it.

HELEN (*once more in a pleading tone*). Will you not introduce me into that great world of yours?

GERARDO. Helen — would you sacrifice your own happiness and that of your family for a fleeting pleasure?

HELEN. No.

GERARDO. Do you promise me to return to your family without show of reluctance?

HELEN. Yes.

GERARDO. And that you will not die, not even as one might die of some ailment?

HELEN. Yes.

GERARDO. Do you really promise me?

HELEN. Yes.

GERARDO. That you will be true to your duties as a mother — and as a wife?

HELEN. Yes.

GERARDO. Helen!

HELEN. Yes! — What more do you want! — I promise you.

GERARDO. That I may leave town without fear?

HELEN (*rising*). Yes.

GERARDO. Now shall we kiss each other once more?

HELEN. Yes — yes — yes — yes — yes — yes —

GERARDO (*after kissing her in a perfunctory manner*). A year from now, Helen, I shall sing again in this town.

HELEN. A year from now! — Yes, to be sure.

GERARDO (*affectedly sentimental*). Helen! (*Helen presses his hand, takes her muff from the chair, pulls from it a revolver, shoots herself in the head and sinks to the floor*) Helen! (*He totters forward, then backward, and sinks into an armchair*) Helen! [*Pause.*

ELEVATOR BOY (*enters; looks at Gerardo and at Helen*). Mr. — Mr. Gerardo!

[*Gerardo does not move. Boy steps up to Helen. Two chambermaids and a scrubwoman, scrubber in hand, edge their way in hesitatingly and step up to Helen.*

SCRUBWOMAN (*after a pause*). She's still alive.

GERARDO (*jumps up, rushes to the door and runs into the proprietor. Pulls him forward*). Send for the police! I must be arrested! If I leave now, I am a brute, and if I remain,

I am ruined, for it would be a breach of contract. (*Looking at his watch*) I still have a minute and ten seconds left. Quick! I must be arrested within that time!

MÜLLER. Fritz, get the nearest policeman!

ELEVATOR BOY. Yes, sir!

MÜLLER. Run as fast as you can! (*Exit elevator boy. To Gerardo*) Don't let it upset you, Mr. Gerardo. That kind of thing is an old story with us here.

GERARDO (*kneels down beside Helen; takes her hand*). Helen! She's still alive! She's still alive! (*To Müller*) If I am arrested, it counts as a legal excuse. How about my trunks? — Is the carriage at the door?

MÜLLER. Has been there the last twenty minutes, sir. [*Goes to the door and lets in the valet who carries down one of the trunks.*

GERARDO (*bending over Helen*). Helen! — (*In an undertone*) It can't hurt me professionally. (*To Müller*) Haven't you sent for a physician yet?

MÜLLER. The doctor has been 'phoned to at once. Will be here in just a minute, I am sure.

GERARDO (*putting his arms under Helen's and half raising her*). Helen! — Don't you recognize me, Helen? — Come now, the physician will be here in just a moment! — Your Oscar, Helen! — Helen!

ELEVATOR BOY (*in the open door*). Can't find a policeman anywhere!

GERARDO (*forgets everything, jumps up, lets Helen fall back to the floor*). I must sing "Tristan" to-morrow!

[*Colliding with several pieces of furniture, he rushes out through the center door.*

CURTAIN

SACRED GROUND

GIUSEPPE GIACOSA

(1847–1906)

In his very succinct review of Giacosa's work, Professor Lander MacClintock, writing in his "Contemporary Drama of Italy", speaks of his being a link between the old and new manner in Italian drama. "He began as a writer of verse plays, of delicate trifles, of mediæval *saynètes*, of adventure plays after the model of Marenco's; later he became a Verist, writing on the formula of Henry Becque, and finally a Realist in the manner of Émile Augier."

He was revered by his public for the clear manner in which he understood their point of view, and his first nights were triumphs differing from the hold D'Annunzio had upon the Italian art life. In fact, Giacosa railed against the very romantic characteristics which made D'Annunzio so distinctive. He likewise declared himself against the fashion of the thesis play. In his interlude, written during 1875 in honor of Goldoni, so one critic remarks, he asserted that "the modern drama is full of . . . dark threats, or, at best, derisive and spasmodic laughter." Later, he complained, in a commemorative address (1898) on Paolo Ferrari, "of the undue preponderance given to the passion of love [in the theater] . . . and enumerated other worthy subjects."

From this it may be conjectured that Giacosa was a moralist; to such an extent was this so that he was criticized for an excess of preachment, where criticism of life was tempered by a profound sympathy with human frailty.

He was born at Colleretta-Parella, near Ivoca, in the val-

ley of Aosta, on October 21, 1847. His father, a Piedmontese lawyer of some distinction, possessed also a literary taste; naturally the boy was prompted to follow in his father's footsteps, studying and graduating in the law from the University of Turin. But, like many other literary men, he proved himself mediocre at the bar, and soon declared himself to a forbearing parent, who gave him a sympathetic ear.

The year 1873 found Giacosa wholly pledged to the writer's calling. For a description of his life at this period — the era of "Una partita a scacchi", — MacClintock refers us to a letter by Giacosa, "Sulla giovane letteratura torinese."

Giacosa was an essayist, a critic, a story writer, and a traveler of no mean discernment, as well as a writer of lyrical and historical plays, and dramas dealing with contemporary life. When his play, "La Signora di Challant" — first written in French for Sarah Bernhardt, and then turned into Italian — was presented by that actress, on December 23, 1891, at the New York Standard Theater, the dramatist came to America for the occasion, and later embodied his experiences during the visit in a series of essays, "Impressioni d'America." As a journalist he was associated with the *Accademia dei filo-drammatici*, and the *Corriere della Sera*, and, in 1901, he founded *La Lettera*, which he edited until his death on September 2, 1906. He was President of the Society of Authors, and possessed reputation as a popular lecturer. With Luigi Illica, he prepared, for Puccini, the libretti for "La Bohème", "La Tosca", and "Madame Butterfly."

The tabulation of Giacosa's plays will indicate the extent and variety of his genius, showing the various channels through which an artist has to pass before becoming the supreme exponent in Italian drama of modern realism.

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Don't Say Flour Unless You Have It in the Sack. (Non dir quattro se non l'hai nel sacco.) 1872.

Storia vecchia. 1872.

Bank Affairs. (Affari di banca.) 1873.

The Sons of the Marquis Arturo. (I figli del marchese Arturo.) 1874.

Sad Doubts. (Tristi dubbii.) 1874.

Gallant Intrigues. (Intrighi galanti.) 1874.

Nocturnal Surprises. (Sorprese notturne.) 1875.

A Candidate. (Un candidato.) 1875.

The Triumph of Love. (Il trionfo d'Amore.) 1875.

Mountain Showers. (Acquazzoni in montagna.) 1876.

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Count Rosso. (Il Conte Rosso.) 1880.

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The Thread. (Il filo.) 1883.

The Siren. (La sirena.) 1883.

Surrender at Discretion. (Resa a discrezione.) 1885.

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The Stronger. (Il più forte.) 1905. See *Drama*, No. 10, 32–156. Chicago, May, 1913.

Libretti (with Luigi Illica):

La Bohème. (1896)

Tosca. (1899)

Madame Butterfly. (1903)

SACRED GROUND

(*Diritti dell' Anima*)

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY GIUSEPPE GIACOSA

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN BY

EDITH AND ALLAN UPDEGRAFF

Characters

PAOLO
MARIO, his brother
ANNA, his wife
MADDALENA, a servant

The action is laid at a small town in the district of Brianza, near Lago di Como. The time is the present.

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SACRED GROUND

A dignified but simple room, with solid, old-fashioned furniture in good condition. It has a fireplace, in which papers may be burned, and contains a sofa and a writing-desk among its furniture. At the back is the entrance door. At the left there is a door leading into Anna's apartments. At the right is a window.

Paolo is sitting at the writing-desk, upon which lies a mass of papers in disorder. Maddalena enters.

PAOLO. Well, has he got back yet?

MADDALENA. Not yet.

PAOLO. You've taken your time about looking for him.

MADDALENA. I went to the Post Café.

PAOLO. I told you to look in his room and in the garden. You didn't have to scour the countryside.

MADDALENA. I felt sure he wasn't there. And he wasn't at the Café either. But they told me where he was. It can't be long before he gets back. He went to the Poggio station to meet the engineer who is coming to see about the water supply. The tax-collector saw him start off on foot. He always walks. But he'll come back in the stage on account of the engineer. The stage ought to be here at any minute. But it's certain that — Are you listening?

PAOLO. No. You may go.

MADDALENA. Yes, sir. But it's certain that if the engineer really comes, your brother won't go away to-morrow. You and your wife expect to go to-morrow, don't you?

PAOLO. Of course he's going. — I don't know. — Yes, we're going to-morrow. — Leave me alone and don't bother me.

MADDALENA. Well, you'll see if I'm mistaken. I tell you that your brother won't go away to-morrow — or the day after to-morrow. Here he is.

MARIO (*enters*). Have you been looking for me?

PAOLO. Yes, for the last hour.

MADDALENA. Your brother was just asking me —

PAOLO. I was n't asking you anything. Go away.

[*He takes her by the arm and puts her out of the room.*

MARIO. What 's happened?

PAOLO. What an irrepressible old woman! Do you think she 'll stay there with her ear to the keyhole?

MARIO. No. Don't bother about her. If you listen you 'll hear her out in the garden already. What 's happened? You seem all worked up.

PAOLO (*after a pause*). Do you know why Luciano killed himself?

MARIO. No.

PAOLO. He killed himself for love — for love of Anna. I have the proofs — there they are on the desk. I found it out to-day — just a little while ago. He killed himself for love of my wife. You and I were his only relatives; he was my playfellow as a child and my dearest friend. And he tried to get her away from me. But she repulsed him. He kept on. She sent him a crushing answer, and, in a fit of despair produced by it, he killed himself.

MARIO. How did you find it out?

PAOLO. I have the proofs, I tell you. I've been reading them over for the last hour. I'm still bewildered. They 've been there for a month. I was in Milan when I got the telegram from London announcing the suicide; and I went at once to Luciano's lodgings, and gathered up all his papers and made a sealed packet of them, which I brought here with me.

MARIO. I told you to burn them.

PAOLO. I was going to; but then I thought it best to wait until the management of the hospital to which he left his money had verified the accounts. An hour ago the town

clerk came here on behalf of the sub-prefect to bring me the pocketbook that was found on the body. You know our consul sent it from London to the foreign minister. I was just about to lock it up in the desk when it occurred to me that it might contain something that could throw light on this strange suicide that had puzzled us all. (*Mario moves uneasily*) Did you — by any chance — guess the reason?

MARIO. Did I guess — ?

PAOLO. Leaving suspicions aside, did you know that he was in love with her?

MARIO. Go on and tell your story. Don't get excited.

PAOLO. No. Answer. Did you know?

MARIO. Yes, I *had* noticed that Luciano was losing his head.

PAOLO. And you said nothing to me about it!

MARIO. What was I to say? When such things come to one from outsiders they loom much larger and are much more offensive. And then there was the possibility of my being mistaken. I never see you and Anna except for a short time here in the country. If you who live in the same house with her all the year round had noticed nothing — Besides, Anna is a woman of character and quite able to take care of herself.

PAOLO. Oh, Anna — Anna is a saint! I have always thought so. But now —

MARIO. Go on. Tell your story.

PAOLO. In the pocketbook I found a letter, and I recognized Anna's handwriting on the envelope.

MARIO. Was it at all out of the way that your wife should write to our cousin?

PAOLO. Of course not. I read the letter. Here it is. (*Mario puts out his hand to take it*) No. I'll read it to you. (*Reading*) "You write me — " (*Speaking*) There's no superscription. (*Reading*) "You write me that, if I don't answer, you will return at once. I love my husband. That is my answer — that, only that, and always that. Please don't torment me. — Anna."

MARIO. Well, well!

PAOLO. The scoundrel!

MARIO. What's the date on that letter?

PAOLO. Luciano himself took care to make known the day and the hour that he got the letter. He wrote underneath in pencil: "Received to-day, the 20th of June, at eleven o'clock in the morning." He killed himself before noon.

MARIO. Poor fellow! It's pretty evident that he went insane. That writing alone shows it.

PAOLO. Of course I didn't stop there. I opened the sealed packet. In it I found four other letters from Anna, all to the same effect and in the same tone. The first is dated three years back. It contains only a few words. She sends back to Luciano a letter that he had written her. I looked for the letter, but it wasn't there. He must have destroyed it and kept only hers. Then there is a note from Rome. You know that last winter Anna was in Rome with her mother for a month. Needless to say, the lover ran after her. Anna refused to see him. Then there is a long one which must have been written when he was recovering from that fall from his horse. It's the only long one of the five — reasoning with him, imploring him in terms of affection. A wonderful letter, kind, lofty. Read it, read it.

MARIO. No, no, no!

PAOLO. Listen — just to this —

MARIO. No, I don't want to.

PAOLO. It's all about me, and about how he and I were such good chums as boys. She speaks of you too. She says —

MARIO. No, please. It's not necessary. I don't want to listen to proofs of my sister-in-law's honesty. —Why keep dragging out those poor letters? It's a great pity that you ever discovered them at all.

PAOLO. A great pity! Is it a great pity that I can now stop weeping for a false friend who tried to rob me of —

MARIO. Oh, stop harping on it. He's dead, and he robbed you of nothing. And even if he were alive, he would still rob you of nothing. Anna was quite able —

PAOLO. Yes, how about that? How about that? Is that a little thing? Is that a great pity? I've never had a shade of doubt concerning Anna — never — and the thought never entered my head. — But it's one thing not to doubt, not to have a thought of doubting, but it's quite another to have the actual proof of her fidelity and love. "I love my husband," is the refrain of all her letters.

MARIO. Did she have to tell you so?

PAOLO. She didn't tell *me*. She told him. She told him, you understand. Luciano had all the qualities that attract women. He was younger and handsomer than I. He talked well; he was full of enthusiasm and courage.

MARIO. It seems to give you great satisfaction to praise him now.

PAOLO. A great pity! If I had done as you wanted me to, and burned those papers, and then some fine day had found out about this affair, how could I ever have been sure —

MARIO. Certainty seems to make you suspicious!

PAOLO. What do you mean?

MARIO. This. If you had been suspicious a year ago, perhaps what has now happened might have been avoided. I did wrong not to open your eyes. If he had had a break with you, perhaps Luciano would never have killed himself.

PAOLO. But I should never have had this proof.

MARIO. Your peace of mind is dearly paid for — by others.

PAOLO. It's no use for me to try to pretend that I feel at all sorry for Luciano.

MARIO. I'm not speaking of him.

PAOLO. Of whom, then?

MARIO. Of your wife. Try to imagine how she must feel.

PAOLO. Do you think she blames herself — ?

MARIO. She can't do otherwise.

PAOLO. She seemed very much grieved, but not in any turmoil.

MARIO. You don't see what's going on all the time. You only notice things when they 're unexpectedly pushed under your nose. Besides, Anna has great control over herself.

PAOLO. And she has done her duty.

MARIO. She has been doing it for some time.

PAOLO. I'll make her happy again; I'll console her.— You 'll see, Mario. It seems as if I were back again in the first days of marriage—as if from to-day she were entirely mine.

MARIO. Leave it to time to console her. You 've read and found out, and that ought to be enough. There 's no need for Anna to know.

PAOLO. She was here an hour ago, when the town clerk brought me the pocketbook. But she went out immediately after.

MARIO. Then she does n't know that you 've read —

PAOLO. But she 'll probably infer that I have.

MARIO. Not necessarily. And in any case she 'll be grateful to you if you pretend not to know.

PAOLO. Oh, come now! Let 's not split hairs. Nothing could be flatter than to prepare a plan of conduct in a case like this. What Anna did, she did for me. And it 's I who must think of making it up to her. She did it for me, for me, do you understand?

MARIO. Has anybody said that she did n't? Why should you fuss and fret so?

PAOLO. I 'm not fussing and fretting. Of course I shall not go up to her and say: "I 've read your letters and thank you so much." You understand that when I speak of making her happy and consoling her, I mean to do so by tenderness, by the most limitless confidence. I have always been like that. I was like that when she fell in love with me. There 's no reason why I should make myself over, even though I don't suit you.

MARIO. How you take it!

PAOLO. It 's you who take it ill. You have n't said a decent word to me. I expect something very different from you. Hearing you talk, one might think that this discovery was a disgrace. Has it done any harm beyond what had already been done? Luciano has been dead a month, and the first sorrow has already been softened down. And if I had remained ignorant about the whole thing, that would not have brought him back to life, would it? He did n't succeed in doing me the injury he intended. Peace to his ashes! I have the certainty of my wife's love; and, no matter how you may feel about it, that seems to me the best stroke of luck that could come my way.

MARIO. Come here. (*He puts his arm about Paolo's neck*) You know that I love you?

PAOLO. Yes.

MARIO. Well then, if you 're satisfied, I 'm satisfied. Does that suit you?

PAOLO. Yes. And now go and do your packing.

MARIO. Oh, by the way, I can't go to-morrow.

PAOLO. No?

MARIO. Falchi, the engineer, has just come. And the day after to-morrow the water company meets.

PAOLO. Oh, to the deuce with the water company!

MARIO. I can't get rid of it so easily; I 'm the president.

PAOLO. We had decided to go to-day, and we were staying over on your account alone.

MARIO. But what can I do? I had to sell the hay. And now it 's a question of three days, perhaps four.

PAOLO. Suppose Anna and I go in the meantime? We 've been paying rent for the chalet for the past fortnight. You can come as soon as you 're free.

MARIO. If you think —

PAOLO. I 'll tell you. The day after to-morrow is Anna's birthday. In the days when business kept me in Milan all through July, Anna and I always passed that day alone together. We did n't make any point of doing so,

but it happened that way. Last year I was able to get away the first of July, and we came here intending to stay until September. Well, three days before her birthday, Anna begged me to take her for a trip to Switzerland. She didn't tell me why, but she insisted that she wanted to go at once. We went to Interlaken, and from there up as far as Murren. On her birthday we were in Murren. It was such a delightful spot, and Anna was so charmed with it, that I engaged a chalet, then and there, for this year. A fortnight ago, you, who never before have been known to move, unexpectedly suggested going with us —

MARIO. Was it indiscreet of me?

PAOLO. Not at all. You could see for yourself that Anna was pleased. She's very fond of you.

MARIO. Yes —

PAOLO. When you found that you would have to stay over, it was she herself who suggested that we wait for you. But that first delay wouldn't keep us from getting there in time; this second one would. And I myself, especially after this, am anxious to be there on a certain day. You'll call it childish, I suppose —

MARIO. No. It's all right. I'll come after you.

PAOLO. We put off going until to-morrow on your account, but, seeing that you don't intend to come right away, we might as well leave this evening. (*Changing his tone*) I feel like being off — getting away from here. Those letters —

MARIO. Burn them. Give them to me.

PAOLO. Oh, no — not yet.

MARIO. Yes, go — go this evening. It's better. But Anna will have to make good use of the time.

ANNA (*entering*). Why shall I have to make good use of the time?

MARIO. I was just telling Paolo that I can't go to-morrow. I shall be kept here three or four days more. But there's no reason why you two should stay here in the heat and wait for me. Paolo has to be in Milan the first of Sep-

tember; every delay shortens his holiday. I'm old enough to travel alone, and, as soon as I can get away, I'll join you. What do you think?

ANNA. Do what suits you best.

MARIO. Besides that, I want to have the house and garden all cleaned up. You two would be in the way, but I'm needed to oversee the thing.

PAOLO. And since Mario is going to stay, I told him that we'd go this evening.

ANNA. So soon?

PAOLO. Your trunks are almost packed, aren't they?

MARIO. You'll save a day. And at this time of the year it's better to travel by night than by day. The St. Gothard pass is wonderful by moonlight.

ANNA (*absent-mindedly*). Yes —

MARIO (*to Paolo*). Then you'd better go right over to the livery stable in the square and tell them to send around a carriage. When does the train leave Poggio?

PAOLO. Twenty minutes past seven.

MARIO. Tell him to be here at six. I should send Battista to order it, but he had to go with the engineer. Besides, it's better to see the carriage yourself; he has a number of antediluvian arks.

PAOLO. Why don't *you* go? You know him and his arsenal; you could make a better choice. Excuse me if —

MARIO. Perhaps you're right. Anna, shall I send Maddalena to help you with your trunks?

ANNA. Yes, thank you, Mario. Send her, please.

MARIO (*going out*). Then we'll have dinner at five.

PAOLO. Yes.

[*Mario goes out. A pause follows. Anna takes a few steps toward the writing-desk. Paolo rushes up to her, takes her in his arms and kisses her.*

ANNA (*freeing herself violently*). Oh, how horrible!

[*The words "How horrible" slip involuntarily from her lips, rather breathed than said.*

PAOLO (*dismayed*). Anna!

ANNA. Was there one of my letters in that pocketbook?

PAOLO. Yes — there was.

ANNA. Did you read it?

PAOLO. Yes.

ANNA. I killed a man — and you kissed me for it!

PAOLO. I didn't mean it. I had made up my mind not to tell you. Besides, Mario advised me not to. Then, when I looked at you — such a flood of tenderness came over me! But what was that word you said, Anna?

ANNA. Forgive me. And promise me that you'll never speak about all this again — that you'll never refer to it directly or indirectly — now or at any time in the future — never.

PAOLO. I promise.

ANNA. And see that you keep your promise.

PAOLO. Oh!

ANNA. See that you keep it. I know you. It's terrible to think that you've found out. As soon as I came in, I read in your eyes that you knew — I had hoped and prayed that you would never know. But, as soon as I came in, I saw at once. (*With an imperceptible touch of mocking pity*) You had such a modest, embarrassed air. You see, I know you so well! Shall I tell you? When Mario suggested that you go to see about the carriage — I thought — he won't go. I had to smile when you sent him.

PAOLO. I noticed it — and wondered.

ANNA. Yes? Mario saw me smile too — and understood.

PAOLO. Please don't say so. It's all right for you to understand *me*.

ANNA. In exchange, eh? And then, when Mario was going out, I thought too: now, as soon as we're alone, he'll come up and kiss me.

PAOLO. But you see —

ANNA. That, too, was natural, wasn't it?

PAOLO. I love you so much, Anna! (*Long pause*) It's strange how you seem to overawe me. I say something,

and immediately I think: Ought I to have said it? Ought I to have kept quiet? It's the first time that I've ever had that sort of feeling about you. Both of us need a change.

ANNA. Yes. — But I don't want to go to-day.

PAOLO. No? But you just said —

ANNA. I've thought better of it. There isn't even time to get ready.

PAOLO. But your trunks are already packed.

ANNA. Oh, there's a lot of stuff to go into them yet.

PAOLO. We have a good eight hours.

ANNA. I'm tired.

PAOLO. And Mario has gone to order the carriage.

ANNA. It will do just as well for another day.

PAOLO. Well, you'll surely go to-morrow?

ANNA. Not to-day, at any rate.

PAOLO. I don't even know how to explain to Mario. It makes you seem so undependable.

ANNA. Oh, Mario will understand.

PAOLO. Better than I?

ANNA. I didn't mean —

PAOLO. Anna, you haven't forgiven me yet for reading those letters.

ANNA. There you are, referring to them already! — Oh, that's all right, Paolo; it isn't that. I have nothing to forgive you. Believe me. There isn't a bit of anger or bitterness in me. I should have given anything in the world to keep you from knowing — for your own sake, for your good, for your peace of mind — not for myself. But yet I felt that sometime or other — (*Pause*) You'll know some day that there has been an unnecessary tragedy.

PAOLO. What do you mean?

ANNA. I don't know. Don't pay any attention—forgive me. [*Is about to leave the room*

PAOLO. Are you going?

ANNA. Yes.

PAOLO. Won't you even tell me whether or not you'll go to-morrow?

ANNA. We have plenty of time to decide.

PAOLO. Oh, well then, there's nothing more to say.

[*Anna goes out.*

PAOLO (*after a pause*). An unnecessary tragedy!

[*He sits with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands.*

MARIO (*entering*). It 's all right. And how about Anna?

PAOLO. She 's just gone out.

MARIO. Maddalena will be here right away. She had gone to the wash-house. Here now, brother, get up and bestir yourself and get rid of this obsession. Of course, just at first — It's best for you to go at once. The trip will brighten you up.

PAOLO. We 're not going.

MARIO. What?

PAOLO. Anna refused to go.

MARIO. Why?

PAOLO. How should I know?

MARIO. Did you tell her —

PAOLO. She understood, she asked me — I couldn't deny it.

MARIO. Did she ask you right out of a clear sky, without your saying anything whatever about it?

PAOLO. For heaven's sake, don't put me through a cross-examination now. If you only knew what ideas have been going through my head!

MARIO. Would you like me to speak to her? I think myself that it's a very bad thing for you to stay here.

PAOLO. Do what you can. You understand her so well! She said as much herself.

MARIO. But you must promise me not to go puzzling your brains in the meantime.

PAOLO. What's the use of my promising? I don't keep my promises. She said that too. She knows me. — You don't know me.

MARIO. Is she in her room?

PAOLO. I think so.

MARIO. And do try to forget about it.

PAOLO. Oh, wait! If — but no, go on, go on. — We'll see later. (*Mario goes out. Paolo takes the letter from his pocketbook and reads very deliberately, accenting each word*) "You write me that if I do not reply, you will return at once." (*Speaking*) You write me! I wonder where that letter is? (*Reading*) "I love my husband. That is my answer, that, only that and always that. I beg you not to torment me." (*Speaking*) I beg you not to torment me — Uhmm!

MADDALENA (*entering*). Here I am.

PAOLO. You're not needed — not for the present, at any rate. We'll call you when we want you.

MADDALENA. Excuse me, sir; but is it true — what they're saying around the town?

PAOLO. What?

MADDALENA. That the town clerk brought you Signor Luciano's pocketbook this morning, with a lot of money for the poor in it?

PAOLO. What a ridiculous idea!

MADDALENA. The town clerk's servant has just been saying so at the wash-house.

PAOLO. There was no money in the pocketbook. The town clerk himself knows that.

MADDALENA. It wouldn't have been surprising if there had been. Signor Luciano didn't visit us often, but when he did, he was a great spender.

PAOLO. I'm glad to hear it.

MADDALENA. Just last year, Liberata, the miner's widow, who went to America to join her son — the one that you gave fifty *lire* to — Well, Signor Luciano gave her a hundred.

PAOLO. What a lot of idle talk! Why, he wasn't even here.

MADDALENA. He wasn't here? Why, I saw him myself —

PAOLO. Oh, for the Lord's sake — ! The woman got news that her husband had been killed in a mine, and that

her son wanted her to go to America, the day before I left for Switzerland, a year ago yesterday or to-day. I remember it because I was able to give her that little money that I had collected for her in gold. She was to leave in two days —

MADDALENA. Yes.

PAOLO. What do you mean by "yes"? Luciano wasn't here. I know he wasn't.

MADDALENA. He came the day that Liberata left for America.

PAOLO. Oh! Two days after we left!

MADDALENA. Yes. He came in the morning.

PAOLO. Did he go to his own place?

MADDALENA. No, no, he came here. But he found nobody but your brother. The poor fellow was bored to death, and went right away again.

PAOLO. Ah! I didn't know. — Then you're right. — Oh, he came? You're right. Oh, he was generous! He left everything he had to the hospital.

MADDALENA. Yes, but he knew the hospital! —

MARIO (*calling from within*) Maddalena!

MADDALENA. Here I am.

MARIO (*enters*). My sister wants you. (*Maddalena goes out. Mario to Paolo*) I've managed to persuade her.

PAOLO. It's a fine thing to have a good advocate!

MARIO. And, as you see, I didn't have to use much eloquence.

PAOLO. I bet I can guess how you did it.

MARIO. Oh, it was very simple. I —

PAOLO. No, let me say it. I should like to have my little triumph too. You gave up the business that was keeping you and decided to leave with us.

MARIO. Exactly.

PAOLO. Eh? Didn't I know? I was going to tell you before you went out, but then I thought I'd wait and see. And when you made that suggestion, Anna suddenly agreed?

MARIO. Do you object?

PAOLO. Why, of course not. The more the merrier! Are we not going to have a good time? And for that purpose new places, travels, hotels, and all that sort of thing, are all right. But company is best of all! It's only when you're running away that you need to reduce your numbers.

MARIO. What's that you're saying?

PAOLO (*puts his hands on Mario's shoulders and looks him straight in the face*). It's when you're running away, you understand, that you need to reduce your numbers— when you're running away — as Anna and I were doing last year.

MARIO. I don't understand what you mean.

PAOLO. You didn't even tell me that Luciano was here last year — nor when he was here.

MARIO. I don't know — I don't remember.

PAOLO. Oh, don't try to put me off with that! You knew, and you knew that Anna insisted on running away so as to avoid him. And I ran away with her, unsuspecting fool! A pretty figure I cut — the husband — taking the train to rush off — before the other one arrived!

MARIO. Well, suppose it to be true! It tells you neither more nor less than the letters.

PAOLO. No. A little more. Everything tells a little more. Put one little grain on top of another, and after a while you have a pile that can crush the life out of you. It tells a little more. It was one thing to keep him at a distance, and it was another to run away from him. You keep a troublesome person at a distance — without imploring him, however! But you run away because you're afraid!

MARIO. Uh!

PAOLO. And look here, let's make a little investigation, so to speak. Let's see. It's improbable that he wrote her that he intended to come. Indeed, it's certain that he didn't write her, because she would have answered: "You write me that you are coming. — I love my husband. — I implore you to stay where you are."

MARIO. Oh!

PAOLO. So it must have been she — who foresaw his intention. She felt him coming — by some divination —

MARIO. You're the first husband to feel injured because his wife did her duty.

PAOLO. Uhmm — duty — dreary word!

MARIO. If there is a good woman in the world —

PAOLO. Woman — or wife?

MARIO. It's the same thing.

PAOLO. Not at all! She's a woman to everybody; she's a wife to me alone. Do you think any man ever married a woman because she was good? Never in the world! I married because I loved and believed myself loved. There are thousands of good women. There is only one whom I love. There is only one who loves me — if that many!

MARIO. Paolo!

PAOLO. And if she loved him? Tell me, if she loved him and repulsed him on account of virtue and duty? Tell me. What sort of figure do I cut? If he were alive, we might have it out, and I might win. But he's dead — he killed himself for love of her. If she loved him, there's nothing in the world that can tear him out of her heart now.

MARIO. You think —

PAOLO. I don't know. And it's just that! It's not knowing. I want to know — I want her to tell me to my face. And she *shall* tell me! Oh, I had a premonition of this as soon as I read that first letter. I had no suspicions before, so I believed that "I love my husband." But I felt all at once as if I had been struck a blow that hurt — that hurt. And I could n't understand what it was. Oh, what a long time it takes for certain fears to take shape! At first they gnaw and gnaw — and you can't make out what they are. I was happy; I told you I was happy; I wanted to convince myself of it. But you could see that fear was gnawing at me. And if she loved him? Oh! Her action was so much the more praiseworthy,

was it? Everybody would praise her. Such a saint! I, too, would go down on my knees to praise her if she were somebody else's wife. But she's mine! It's not for me to be my wife's judge. I'm too much an interested party to be a good judge. I'm the owner — she's mine — it's my interests that are at stake! You'll say I ought to admire her because, when she could have taken everything, she took only a part. But I can see only what she has taken, not what is left.

MARIO. Brother, you must be crazy!

PAOLO. But can't you see that she abhors me?

MARIO. Oh, my God!

PAOLO. She abhors me! You weren't here a moment ago. Can't you see that she has to have you around to help her endure my presence?

MARIO. To-day, perhaps — because she knows that you've read — Didn't I warn you? It's terribly embarrassing for her.

PAOLO. No, it's not only to-day. You've never budged from this place — never. For the fifteen years that you've been living this country life, you've never been away from here for a week. And then a fortnight ago you quite suddenly took it into your head to become a traveler. Did she ask you to?

MARIO. I solemnly swear —

PAOLO. I wouldn't believe anything you told me. Anna shall tell me herself.

MARIO. What are you going to do?

PAOLO (*about to leave the room*). I'm going to ask her.

MARIO. No, for heaven's sake, Paolo!

PAOLO. Let me go.

MARIO. No, no! Maddalena is in there with her.

PAOLO. That's easily remedied. (*Calls in a loud voice*) Anna!

MARIO. Oh, what an ungrateful wretch!

PAOLO. If she loved me, it wasn't hard for her to reject him. — If she loved him, I don't owe her any gratitude.

ANNA (*entering*). Did you call me?

PAOLO (*to Mario, who is about to leave the room*). No, no — stay. Yes, Anna, I wanted to ask you one thing. Whatever your answer is, I'll believe it.

ANNA. I 'm sure you will.

PAOLO. Was it you who asked Mario to come with us? I don't mean to-day.

ANNA. I never asked him — neither to-day nor at any other time.

MARIO. Now you see!

ANNA. I didn't ask him and I didn't suggest it to him. I feel forced to say, however, that if Mario hadn't offered to come, I shouldn't have been willing to go either.

PAOLO. To-day, of course. But how about a fortnight ago?

MARIO. Oh, can't you see how ridiculous it all is? I told you before —

ANNA. No, Mario, it isn't ridiculous. It's quite natural that Paolo should want to know; and he has a right to question me.

PAOLO. I don't want to appear to be standing on my rights.

ANNA. You make a mistake in not doing so. We should stand upon our own, — and respect those of others. A fortnight ago I should have gone with you alone.

MARIO. Oh, thank God!

PAOLO. Were you afraid — that she might say no?

ANNA. But when Mario suggested going with us — I was very glad.

PAOLO. That 's the same thing as saying that my company would have bored you.

ANNA. No, it wouldn't have bored me. But it would have been painful to me.

PAOLO. And may I ask why?

ANNA. Now that we have gone this far, you may. Because then you didn't know the reason of the tragedy that had occurred, but now you do know it. And now, when you know, you will understand that I must have been much afflicted. But for the sake of your peace of mind

I had to hide my affliction from you; and I had a right to hide it, since I had nothing to reproach myself with toward you. You can't help realizing that it would be harder for me to hide my feelings if we two were alone together — every hour — every hour — ! While the presence of a third person —

MARIO. Now you see! Now you see!

ANNA. Then Mario had the happy thought of going with us.

PAOLO. Mario, who knew.

ANNA. I don't know whether or not Mario knew.

PAOLO. Did he never speak to you about it?

MARIO. Don't answer him, Anna, don't answer him. Come away. He's ill — he's not reasonable — poor fellow — it'll pass off — and then he'll understand —

ANNA. Oh, no. It's unnecessary —

PAOLO. An unnecessary tragedy, eh, Anna?

ANNA. Have you anything more to say to me?

PAOLO (*imperiously*). Yes. I want to see the letters that Luciano wrote you.

ANNA. Of course! I'll go and get them.

[*She is about to go.*

PAOLO. Remember I want them all.

ANNA (*returning and handing him a key*). They are in my desk, in the first drawer to the right. They are tied together with a black ribbon.

PAOLO. Very well. [*He goes out.*

MARIO. Forgive him, Anna; he doesn't know what he's doing. He loves you so much — and he's so weak.

ANNA. Oh, he has no mercy!

MARIO. Like all weak people. But he loves you, he loves you!

ANNA. So much the worse. His love will be his ruin.

MARIO. No. It's your place to help him.

ANNA. Perhaps — as long as I can do any good.

[*Paolo returns with the letters in his hand. He goes to the desk, takes up the others, throws them all into the fireplace, and sets fire to them.*

MARIO. What are you doing? Anna — look!

ANNA (*stands motionless, watching the letters burn, and murmuring in a low voice as if through a dream*). Gone! Gone! Gone! Gone!

[*Paolo goes up to Anna with his hands clasped in a frenzy of supplication. He bursts into tears, and falls down on his knees before her. Mario goes out half touched and half disgusted.*

PAOLO (*still on his knees*). And now — can you forgive me?

ANNA (*in an indulgent and hopeless voice, reluctantly placing her hand on his head*). Get up, get up.

PAOLO. Tell me you forgive me. I swear that I should be glad to die here and now.

ANNA. Yes, yes. But get up; don't stay in that position. It hurts me.

PAOLO (*rising*). I don't know what it was that got into my head — but I've suffered horribly.

ANNA. Yes, I can see that you have — yes — calm yourself.

PAOLO. Mario didn't — It was he who irritated me from the very beginning. (*Anna is about to leave the room*) Don't go away — stay here a moment. (*Anna sits down on the sofa*) You see that violent fit didn't last long. It was on account of Mario's being here. Mario is good and reasonable, but his presence irritated me. — Yes, yes, you were right. But you must also understand my state of mind. (*Rises and walks up and down*) When all is said and done, what does this outbreak mean? It means that I love you. — And it seems to me that's the essential thing. One must look to the root of things. We've been married for five years, and I ask you if I've ever given you the slightest reason for complaint. I think not. And five years are five years. I have worked my way into a good position. You have always been able to go into society. I never cared much for amusements that are nothing but amusements. I used to have my bachelor friends, and my club — where other husbands go after

they 've been married a year or so. I gave them all up. I don't want to make a virtue out of it, but —

ANNA. Please don't walk up and down so much.

PAOLO. Excuse me. Will you let me sit down here beside you? (*Long silence*) When shall I see you smile again, Anna? No, don't get up. Then you have n't forgiven me!

ANNA. What do you want, Paolo? What do you want me to do? Tell me quickly.

PAOLO. You made me promise never to say anything about —

ANNA. Yes, but I also told you that you would n't keep your promise. You're making a mistake, however. Believe me. Don't ask me anything. When there is no more danger, I promise you — and *I* keep my promises — I promise you that I will tell you everything without your asking me. And it will be a good thing for both of us. But I want to be the one to decide when.

PAOLO. Very well, Anna, don't tell me anything. — But come away with me, with me alone. I'll speak to Mario about it. He was only coming on your account, and he'll be much more pleased to see us go away together as good friends. I understand that it's painful to you to recall those memories. Very well, instead of reminding you of them, I'll help you to forget them — I swear I will. I swear that I'll never refer to them again. But come away with me, come with me, and you'll see how much love —

ANNA. Don't insist on it, Paolo. If you insist I'll go with you, but —

PAOLO. No, no, I don't insist. You see that I 'm begging for you; I don't want you by force. But think again, think again. I realize what you have done; and I'll spend all the rest of my life in making up to you for it. I realize it. There is n't a saintlier woman in the world than you. But you ought to try to put yourself in my place and have some pity for me too.

ANNA (*smiling bitterly*). Ah!

PAOLO. Why do you want to keep up this torment? You said: when there isn't any more danger. What danger can there be? On whom does that danger depend — on you or on me? What is there about us that time can change? I have always loved you; I love you now; and at this moment I love you more than I have ever loved you before. — Give me your hand — just your hand. God, Anna, you're so beautiful! And you're mine — you're my wife! And the vow that you plighted to me when you married me was not only a vow of fidelity but of love. Come away with me, come with me!

ANNA. No, no, no!

PAOLO. No? Are you afraid — that you'll be unfaithful to him?

ANNA. Paolo! Paolo!

PAOLO. And suppose I insist upon it?

ANNA. You can't insist upon it.

PAOLO. But suppose I do?

ANNA. Paolo!

PAOLO. Suppose I command you?

ANNA. In one moment you would destroy all my work. But — your violence would set me free.

PAOLO. Go on and say it all.

ANNA. Is that what you want? Have we come to that? I've done all I could — !

PAOLO. Yes, go ahead. Say it.

ANNA. I loved Luciano and I still love him.

PAOLO. Oh!

ANNA. I loved him, I loved him. — Do you hear? — And it gives me the most intense joy to tell you so. And you never saw that I was dying with the desire to scream out my secret! And when I watched you driving me to bay with your fierce curiosity, I said to myself: it's coming, it's coming! — It has come now. I loved him, I love him, and I have never loved anyone in the world but him! And I am suffering an agony of remorse for my virtue. Now you know.

PAOLO. Very well. [*Is about to leave the room.*

ANNA. Oh, no. You must stay here now; it's your turn to listen to me. You wanted me to speak. Now I'm speaking. Now it's I who will insist on being heard. Of course, you realize that after a talk like this, it's all over between you and me. So I must tell you everything. I listened to you, I will listen to you again if you want me to. But now you must listen to me. What have you ever done for me? What help have you ever given me? Did you see when you ought to have seen? Did you even suspect? No. A man had to die — and even that wasn't enough! When you were not suffering as you suffer now, were you able to see that I was suffering? You thought my grief was for the death of one of your relatives! You couldn't understand that the very soul was crushed out of me: you slept beside me those first nights and never noticed that I had to stuff the blankets into my mouth to keep from screaming aloud! Then all at once you found out the facts. And what were those facts? That I, your wife, through long years, in silence, had stood guard over your peace of mind and fulfilled what the world calls my duty. Then your curiosity was awakened, and, to make up for lost time, you tried to violate my soul, to pry into its innermost depths. Oh, no, Paolo, no! That can't be done — neither by you nor by me. One must not try to know everything. And you can't walk into people's souls by the front door; you have to creep into them by stealth. You tried to force mine open. Very well, you've had the satisfaction of seeing. There's nothing more there for you.

PAOLO. No? You're in the right, of course? — Well, you *are* in the right — even I recognize it. But then, I've never had your love? You said so yourself. I've never had your love? Well, then? You're in the right. But do you know what I'll do? I'll drive you out of my house.

ANNA (*joyously*). Oh, I'll go, I'll go, I'll go. And I'll never come back! And you mustn't make any demands

on me, or ever come near me again. I have no more strength to keep me merciful. When I've said good-by, I shall be dead as far as you are concerned!

[*She runs into her room. Paolo, motionless, thunderstruck, stands waiting. Anna returns with her hat and coat on, and crosses the stage as if to go out.*

PAOLO. No, Anna, no, no, no! Anna, no! For pity's sake, wait! We're both crazy! What would become of us? I need you! (*Approaching her*) Don't go. I don't want you to, you know I don't. I was crazy. Don't go. You'll see — our whole lives — (*Anna tries to tear herself away*) No, for pity's sake! If you go — if you once get away — if you speak — I feel that it's inexorable. Stay, stay, Anna!

ANNA (*freeing herself*). Good-by!

[*She goes out.*

CURTAIN

AN INCIDENT

LEONID ANDREYEV

(1871–1919)

ANDREYEFF, Andreyev, or Andreev, was born August 9, 1871, at Orel, at a distance of two hundred miles south of Moscow, and was graduated there from the gymnasium. His father died while he was at the High School, and Leonid went hungry while studying law at the University of Petrograd. At the age of twenty-six, he graduated from the University of Moscow, having the while maintained himself by painting portraits. At an early age in his career he attempted suicide.

With an acute mind, his insatiable love for reading took him through classic Russian literature and the classics of other countries. Kipling, Jack London and Wells were familiar to him in translation. In 1897, by the time he was ready to practice law, his inclinations were pledged in other directions. He had no success at the bar, so he undertook newspaper reporting for the Moscow *Courier*, and a story published therein attracted to him the admiration of Maxim Gorki. Such pieces of fiction as "The Abyss" and "In the Fog" won him widespread recognition.

Events in the life of Andreyev are naught in comparison with the spiritual revolution and the spiritual idealism of the man within. He attracted from those who knew him both admiration and antagonism; he brought upon himself the censor, but as well a deluge of praise from the critics. His realism aimed for universal good rather than for local amelioration. His two insistent themes, claims Thomas Seltzer,

one of his translators, were Death and Loneliness. Yet, withal, Andreyev was not a pessimist; he was a seeker after the reason for existence as it is in comparison with the life that should be. Read "To the Stars" (1905), "Savva" (1906), "The Life of Man" (1906) and you will be able to judge of the value of the spiritual autobiography embedded in his work. Mr. Seltzer writes:

"Andreyev forever asks this question: How shall we make life livable, how reconcile our feeling of what life ought to be with the evils which fill the world? Andreyev, contrary to the general notion, does not, I think, hate life; he loves it. It is because he loves it that all the misery and wrongs and ills of the world so appal him. He wants to solve the riddle."

In 1905, at the time Maxim Gorki was arrested on political charges, Andreyev suffered imprisonment for the same reasons. Yet we are told that he strove to keep himself aloof from specific politics, and he gained influence as a writer by dealing with those problems vital to Russian society, by showing an artistry, a sincere manner which all the more carried with it censure because of his burning intensity. Critics saw in his written word implied criticism.

He lived in the maelstrom of Russia's fight for liberty, and, in his stories and plays, symbolized the aspiration of the human soul. People read him unfailingly. "King Hunger" sold eighteen thousand copies in a single day. In 1906, he deserted city life, and built himself a home at Terioki, thirty miles from Petrograd. Here, both realism and symbolism became his outlets. The list of plays accredited to him will measure the extent of his activity.

In 1913, Andreyev published in the *Maski* a "Letter on the Theater", followed in 1914 by another. Herein he described the drama of "all thought or all soul", toward which he strove. He frowned upon external action, as Maeterlinck did with his marionette theory; he wrote of the obsolete theater of tin swords, and preached the theater of intellectual striving. "What is make-believe by the side of truth?" he asks. He wrote, "Not love, nor hunger, nor ambition

but thought in its sufferings, joys, and struggles, is the true hero of the life of to-day."

A pen portrait of Andreyev presents him as a huge man loving huge things, changeable in temperament and child-like in enthusiasm, interested in every new thing, as though it were the one concern of his life, consumed in everything he undertook. Now he would be silent and inactive; then suddenly he would write through several nights, until he had done a play or story, pacing his huge study back and forth, drinking tea, and acting out to himself the situations he had in mind. He loved company, he always wanted to be the center of things, and resented taking a second place. Like a financial potentate, the success which he had brought him adequate surroundings, and he could often be seen walking through his estate with his dog, proud in external bearing. Yet beneath it all there was beautiful compassion in his heart.

Andreyev died in 1919.

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AN INCIDENT

BY LEONID ANDREYEV

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY

LEO PASVOLSKY

Characters

KRASNOBRUHOV, a merchant
GAVRILENKO, a policeman
POLICE OFFICIAL

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AN INCIDENT

Two persons take part in the action: a merchant, Krasnobruhov, who confesses his crime, and a police official. There is also a policeman, Gavrilenko, who brings in the repenting merchant, and some other living automata who carry him out.

The room resembles an unfurnished factory. The official barks abruptly into the telephone; his voice expresses anger and astonishment. Gavrilenko leads in the merchant, holding him respectfully, with two fingers only. Krasnobruhov is a fat, healthy-looking old man, with a red beard. He appears to be very much excited. He wears no hat, and his clothes are in suspicious disorder.

THE OFFICIAL (*at the telephone*). Who? What? Why, of course, I can hear you if I am speaking to you — the murdered? Oh, yes! Yes, yes, two of them — Of course I can hear you. What is it? What *are* the motives? Well? I can't understand a thing. Who ran away? The wounded man ran away? Say, what are you talking about? Where did the wounded man run to?

GAVRILENKO. Your Honor, so I brought him —

THE OFFICIAL. Don't bother me! Oh, yes, so one ran away, and you're bringing over the other — and what about the murderers? What? Ran away also? Look here, don't you try to get me all muddled up with those motives of yours! What's that? I can't make out a blessed thing. Listen to me! If you want to make the report — Do you hear me? — Go ahead and make it! Don't whistle through your nose at me. I'm not a clarinet. What? What music? No, no, I say, I'm not a clarinet. Do you hear? Hello! Oh, damn you! Hello!

(*Hangs up the receiver, throwing an angry side-glance at Krasnobruhov. Then sits down*) Well? What do you want?

GAVRILENKO. So, your Honor, if you will permit me to report, he blocked the traffic and the wagons. He came out in the middle of the market-place, right in the middle of the traffic, and hollered out that he was a merchant and had killed a man, and so I took him along.

THE OFFICIAL. Drunk? You old goat, drunk as a pig?

GAVRILENKO. Not at all, your Honor, quite sober. Only he stopped in the middle of the market-place, right in the road, and started hollering out, so that, your Honor, not a wagon could pass, and a big crowd collected. He hollered out, "I killed a human being, brethren, I confess!" And so I brought him over. It's his conscience, your Honor.

THE OFFICIAL. Why didn't you say that at the beginning, you blockhead? Let him go, Gavrilenko, don't hold him like a dog. Who are you?

KRASNOBRUHOV. Prokofi Karpovich Krasnobruhov, a merchant. (*Kneels down and says in a repentant tone*) I confess, brethren! Take me, bind me! I killed a human being!

THE OFFICIAL (*rising to his feet*). Oh! So that's what you are!

KRASNOBRUHOV. I confess, brethren, I confess! Let me atone for my sins! I can't stand it any longer! Take me, bind me — I killed a human being! I'm an unconfessed scoundrel, a criminal against nature! I killed a human being!

[*Lowers his head to the ground.*

GAVRILENKO. That's the way he was hollering out there, your Honor, right in the middle of the traffic —

THE OFFICIAL. Shut up! Stand up, now! Tell me all about it. Whom did you kill?

KRASNOBRUHOV (*getting up heavily and smiting himself on the chest*). I murdered a human being. I want to atone for my crime. I can't stand it any more. It's too much for

me. My conscience won't let me live, brethren. Come on, shave me![1]

THE OFFICIAL. Shave you!

KRASNOBRUHOV. Shave my head, put me in irons! I want to atone for my crime. (*Sobs aloud*) I killed a human being. Forgive me, brethren!

[*Falls on his knees again and bows to the ground.*

THE OFFICIAL. Up with you! Now talk like a sane man, will you?

GAVRILENKO. That's just the way he did up there, your Honor, and started hollering —

THE OFFICIAL. Shut up! What's your name? Is this your trunk?

KRASNOBRUHOV (*gets up again and wipes his tears and perspiration*). What trunk? I don't know about any trunk. We deal in vegetables. Oh, Lord! In vegetables.

THE OFFICIAL. What trunk! Don't know anything about the trunk, hey? But when you stuffed him into the trunk, you knew all about it, eh? And when you shipped his body by freight, you knew it, eh?

KRASNOBRUHOV. I don't know about any trunks. Wish I could get a drink of water. (*To Gavrilenko*) Give me a drink of water, boy, I'm all hoarse. (*Sighs heavily*) O—oh.

THE OFFICIAL (*to Gavrilenko*). Stay where you are. And you don't know which trunk it is? Gavrilenko, how many trunks have we here?

GAVRILENKO. Four trunks, your Honor, and one suit case. We've opened three, your Honor, and haven't had time for the fourth yet.

THE OFFICIAL (*to the merchant*). Did you hear that?

KRASNOBRUHOV (*sighing*). I don't know about any trunks.

THE OFFICIAL. Where is yours then?

KRASNOBRUHOV. My what?

THE OFFICIAL. How should I know whom you killed there, or cut, or strangled? Where's the body?

[1] In Russia, half of the head of a convict is shaved just before he is deported to Siberia. — Translator's Note.

KRASNOBRUHOV. The body? Oh, I guess it's all rotted away now. (*Falls on his knees again*) I confess, brethren, I killed a human being! And buried the body, brethren. I thought I could deceive the people, but I see now that I can't do it. My conscience won't let me. I can't sleep or rest at all now. Everything 's dark before my eyes, and all I have now is my suffering. I want to atone for my sins. Strike me, beat me!

THE OFFICIAL. Up with you! Speak plainly now!

KRASNOBRUHOV (*gets up and mops his face*). I am speaking plain enough, I reckon. I thought that after some time I'd forget it, perhaps, and find joy in life, and burn candles to the poor soul. But no! My torment is unnatural. I haven't a minute of rest. And every year it gets worse and worse. I thought it might pass away. And now I confess, brethren! I was sorry for the property. We deal in vegetables and I was ashamed for my wife and children. How could it happen so suddenly? I was a good man all the time, and then, a scoundrel, a murderer, a criminal against nature!

THE OFFICIAL. Speak to the point, I tell you!

KRASNOBRUHOV. But I am speaking to the point. Every night I cry and cry. And my wife says to me, says she, "What's the use of crying here, Karpich, and shedding tears on the pillows? Better go to the people and bow down to the ground and accept the suffering. What difference does it make to you?" says she. "You're pretty old already; let them send you to Siberia; you can live there, too. And we'll pray for you here. Go on, Karpich, go on!" So we cried together, and cried; and couldn't decide it. It's hard, it's frightful, brethren! When I look around me — We deal in vegetables; you know, carrots, and cabbages and onions. (*Sobs*) And she says to me, "Go on, Karpich, don't be afraid. Drink some tea, have a little fun, and then go and bear your cross!" — And I tried doing it once. She gave me a clean shirt, and treated me to tea with honey, and combed my hair with

her white hand, — but I could n't do it! I was too weak! Lost my courage! I got as far as the market-place, and came out into the middle of the street, and suddenly a car came up — So I turned into a saloon. I confess, my friends, instead of repentance, I spent three days and three nights in the saloon, polishing the bar and licking the floor. I don't know where all that drink went to. That's what conscience does to you!

THE OFFICIAL. Yes. That 's conscience for you, all right! But I 'm very glad, very glad. — Gavrilenko, did you hear?

GAVRILENKO. That 's just the way he was hollering there, your Honor.

THE OFFICIAL. Shut up! But go ahead, my friend.

KRASNOBRUHOV. I 'm no friend, I 'm an enemy of mankind, a criminal against nature. Take me, bind me! I killed a human being! I 'm a murderer! Come now, bind me! Shave me!

THE OFFICIAL. Yes, yes, I 'm very glad to see you repenting. Gavrilenko, do you happen to remember this case? What cases have we?

GAVRILENKO. Don't remember, your Honor!

KRASNOBRUHOV. Bind me!

THE OFFICIAL. Yes, yes, I can understand your noble impatience, but — And when did it happen? Of course, we know everything, but there are so many cases, you know! Look how many trunks we have. It's like a freight station — Whom did you — when was it?

KRASNOBRUHOV. When? Oh, I guess it must be about twenty-one years. Twenty-one and a little extra, maybe. About twenty-two, you might say.

THE OFFICIAL. Twenty-two? What do you want then?

KRASNOBRUHOV. I thought I 'd get over it. But no! It gets worse and worse every year, more and more bitter every day. In the beginning I did n't have any visions at least. And now visions come to me. I confess, brethren, I 'm a murderer!

THE OFFICIAL. But, but allow me — Twenty-two years — What guild [1] do you belong to?

KRASNOBRUHOV. The first. We sell wholesale.

THE OFFICIAL. Yes, yes, Gavrilenko, a chair. Take a seat, please.

KRASNOBRUHOV. Wish I could get a drink,— I 'm all hoarse.

THE OFFICIAL. And so you had tea with honey again?

KRASNOBRUHOV. Yes, of course.

THE OFFICIAL. Gavrilenko, two glasses of tea — make one weak — You take your tea weak, don't you? Your name, please?

KRASNOBRUHOV. Prokofi Karpovich Krasnobruhov. But when are you going to bind me, your Honor?

THE OFFICIAL. Take a seat, please. And, Prokofi Karpich, is n't that your store on the corner? A wonderful sign you have there! That 's real art. You know, sometimes, I am astonished at the artistic beauty of our signs. Why, sometimes my friends ask me why I don't go to art galleries, the Hermitage, and so on, you know — And I say, "Why should I go there? Why, my whole district is an art gallery." Ye-es! (*Gavrilenko returns with the tea*) I 'm sorry, but we have no honey here. The office, you know.

KRASNOBRUHOV. I 'm not thinking about honey now. I left the business to my children. Let them have it now. But when are you going to bind me, your Honor? I wish you 'd hurry it up.

THE OFFICIAL. Bind you? Gavrilenko, get out of here! And next time you see a dignified person on the market-place, treat him with more respect, do you hear? Where is his hat?

GAVRILENKO. It was lost there in the street. The people left nothing of it. So, your Honor, when he came out there, hollering and —

[1] Russian merchants belong to one of three "guilds", according to the size of their business. The first is the highest and requires the largest license-money. — Translator's Note.

THE OFFICIAL. Get out! Yes, there's people for you. How can you ever make them understand the fundamentals of law and order, so to speak? I'm sick and tired of them. My friends sometimes ask me, "How is it, Pavel Petrovich, that we never hear a pleasant word from you?" And how can you expect anything like that? I'd be glad myself, you know; I'm just dying for society conversation. There are so many things in the world, you know! The war, the Cross of St. Sophia, and, — in general, — politics, you know!

KRASNOBRUHOV. I wish you'd bind me now.

THE OFFICIAL. Bind you? Why, that's a pure misunderstanding, Prokofi Karpich, a pure misunderstanding. But why don't you drink your tea? Your worthy feelings do you honor and, in general, I'm very glad, but — the time limitation. You must have forgotten about the limitation! I hope it wasn't your parents.

KRASNOBRUHOV. Oh, no, no, not my parents. It was a girl — in the woods — and I buried her there.

THE OFFICIAL. Now you see! I understood right away that it wasn't your parents. That's not the kind of man you are! Of course, if it were your parents, you know, — well, your father or mother, — then there's no time limitation. But for your girl, and in criminal cases generally, murders and so on, everything is covered by the ten years' limitation. So you didn't know that? Is that so? Of course, we'll have to make an investigation, a confirmation, but that's nothing. You shouldn't have excited yourself so. Go back home and sell your vegetables, and we'll be your customers. — What about the tea, though?

KRASNOBRUHOV. How can I think about the tea, when I feel as if there were hot coals under me?

THE OFFICIAL. You shouldn't have tormented yourself so, no indeed! Of course, you weren't acquainted with the Law. You should have gone to a lawyer, instead of to your wife.

KRASNOBRUHOV (*falls on his knees*). Bind me! Don't make me suffer!

THE OFFICIAL. Well, now, now, please get up! Why, we can't bind you. You're a queer fellow! Why, if we were to bind everyone like you, we should n't have enough rope to go round! Go home now and — We have your address.

KRASNOBRUHOV. But where shall I go to? I've come here. Why don't you bind me, instead of saying that? There is no rope, you say. What's the use of mocking me? I came to you in earnest and you make fun of me! (*Sighing*) But, of course, I deserve it. I repent. Bind me! Beat me! Mock me, brethren! Strike this old face of mine; don't spare my beard! I 'm a murderer!

[*Falls down on his knees.*

THE OFFICIAL (*impatiently*). But look here, that's too much! Get up! I 'm telling you to go home; I've no time to waste with you. Go home!

KRASNOBRUHOV (*without rising*). I've no home, brethren, no asylum except the prison! Bind me. (*Shouting*) Shave me!

THE OFFICIAL (*also shouting*). What do you take me for? A barber? Get up!

KRASNOBRUHOV. I won't get up! I 'm repenting before you, and you can't refuse me! My conscience torments me! I don't want your tea. Bind me! Tie my hands! Shave me!

THE OFFICIAL (*calling*). Gavrilenko! (*The policeman enters*) Just listen to the way he shouts here! With that conscience of his, eh? As if I had time to bother with you. — Gavrilenko, raise him!

[*Gavrilenko attempts to raise the merchant, who resists him.*

GAVRILENKO (*muttering*). That's just the way he was hollering — I can't raise him, your Honor, he won't get up.

THE OFFICIAL. Ah, he won't? Petruchenko! Sidorenko! Youshchenko! Raise him! (*The policemen run in, and the four raise the merchant, while the official becomes even more angry*) Just listen to this! He goes to the very market-place and blocks the traffic! Just wait, I 'll teach you to block the traffic; I 'll teach you to shout in a public place!

KRASNOBRUHOV. You don't dare! Bind me, or I 'll send in a complaint. I don't care! I 'll go to the minister himself! I killed a human being! My conscience won't let me live! I repent!

THE OFFICIAL. Your conscience? My goodness, he's happy about it! And where was your conscience before this? Why didn't you come sooner? Now you are ready enough to go into the market-place and create a disorder! Why didn't you come sooner?

KRASNOBRUHOV. Because I hadn't suffered enough before. And now I can't stand it any more; that's why I came! You daren't refuse me!

THE OFFICIAL. Hadn't suffered enough? Listen to that mockery. Here we are looking and searching for them; we've got five trunks here, and a special bloodhound, and he — He hid himself, the rascal, and not a sound. As though he weren't there. And then he gets out into the market-place and starts shouting, "My conscience. Bind me!" Here we are, breaking our heads over the new cases, and he comes around with that girl of his — Get out! Get out of here!

KRASNOBRUHOV. I won't go. You daren't drive me back! I've already said good-by to my wife. I won't go!

THE OFFICIAL. Then you'll say "Good-morning" to your wife again. My goodness, he said "Good-by" to his wife, and drank some tea with honey, and put a clean shirt on! I'll bet you had to pour twenty glasses down your throat, before you filled up. And now he comes around here! Get out!

KRASNOBRUHOV. And did you see me drink it? Maybe only half of it was tea and the other half my bitter tears! I won't go! Send me to Siberia! Put me in irons! Shave my head!

THE OFFICIAL. There's no prison for you. Go and hire a room in Siberia, if you want to. We've got no prison for you.

KRASNOBRUHOV. You 'll send me to prison! I won't go anywhere else, do you hear me? Brethren, I want to suffer

for my deed; I want to go to Siberia for twenty years. I'm a murderer. I killed a human being.

THE OFFICIAL. No Siberia for you, do you hear? Why didn't you come sooner? We can't send you to prison now. We haven't room enough for real ones. And he comes around here with his conscience! He suffers, the scoundrel! Go ahead and suffer. There is no prison for you.

KRASNOBRUHOV. So you won't send me?

THE OFFICIAL. No!

KRASNOBRUHOV. You'll shave my head, all right.

THE OFFICIAL. Go and shave yourself!

KRASNOBRUHOV. No! You shave me. (*Attempts to kneel down; bends his legs at the knees, but is held in the air by the four policemen*) Brethren, have pity on me! Bind me! Haven't you got a piece of cord somewhere? Any old piece. I won't run away even if you tie me with a piece of twine. My conscience won't let me. Any old piece. Isn't there any room for me at all in prison, your Honor? I don't need much room, your Honor. Please bind me and shave off my gray hair! Please let me walk at least over the edge of the Vladimir [1] trail and get covered with its dust! Give me the shameful badge,[2] Cain's badge! Lead me to the hangman, let him torture me!

THE OFFICIAL. Gavrilenko! Take him out! Sidorenko! Help him!

KRASNOBRUHOV (*resists them*). I won't go! I won't go if you drag me! Shave my head!

THE OFFICIAL. Youshchenko! Give a hand! You'll go, all right.

KRASNOBRUHOV (*struggling*). Shave me! I'll complain. You have no right!

THE OFFICIAL. Gavrilenko, carry him out!

[1] The trail through Russia and western Siberia, over which gangs of convicts are led into the penal colonies. — Translator's Note.

[2] On the back of each convict's coat, there is a badge that resembles the ace of diamonds. — Translator's Note.

GAVRÍLENKO. Get him by the leg! Catch him under the arms!

KRASNOBRUHOV (*struggling*). You won't carry me out!

THE OFFICIAL. Go on, now! (*The merchant is carried out with care and respect. The official smooths out his moustache, and raises his glass of tea, which proves to be cold.*) Vasilenko! A glass of hot tea! Oh, the deuce — Hot tea! Yes — Is the wounded man here?

VASILENKO. He's dead now, your Honor, dead and cold.

THE OFFICIAL. Get out of here!

CURTAIN

A MERRY DEATH

NIKOLAI EVRÉINOV

(1879–)

Little or nothing is to be had in English on Evréinov, Yevreinov, or Yevreynoff, — according to the disquieting Russian spelling. Yet, from the slight accounts we have, we can realize that his was a vital, an experimental attitude toward the theater, and his various critical books, which sought to explain his theories — like the three-volume "Theatre for One's Self", (1917), "Russian Theatrical Decorative Art", "An Introduction to Monodrama" (1909) and "The Theatre as Such" (1913) — would add much to the æsthetic philosophy of the stage. He is a young man, born February 26, 1879. He had his first theater at five, wrote his first novel at thirteen, acted at fourteen, and graduated from the law school in 1901. He held a government post for a while, managed various art activities at Petrograd, studied music with Rimsky-Korsakoff as his passion. And finally, after he had attained certain excellence in play-writing, helped to form the Starinny Theatre, whose *régisseur* he became. His progressive interest in the theater gained for him the post of *régisseur* of Vera Kommissarzkevskaya's theater in Petrograd, in succession to Meyerhold. Thereafter, he figured prominently in various theatrical enterprises.

Oliver Sayler, in his entertaining book on "The Russian Theatre under the Revolution" (Little, Brown, and Company, Boston), outlines the life of Evréinov. There is an untranslated biography of the dramatist, called "The Book about Yevreinov", by Kamyensky. According to Sayler, the following list of plays will measure the unremitting activity of the playwright, who combined with his

interest for the theater, a deep concern for art and musical composition, and studied with authority such subjects as corporal punishment and Russian ceremonials: "The Rehearsal", "Fools as Blind Idols", "The Foundation of Happiness" (1902), "Styopik and Manyourotchka" (1905), "The Handsome Despot", "War", "Grandmother" (1907), "Pintus" (an adaptation from Aristophanes), "Such a Woman", "The Merry Death" (a harlequinade), "The Representation of Love", "The Green-Room of the Soul", and "Revizor" (a buffoonerie). In addition to this, he was the author of a lyric opera, "Sweet Cake" (produced November, 1912), an operetta, "The Fugitive" (produced November, 1915) and an opera-bouffe, "The Rape of the Sabine Women."

A volume of plays, published in 1914, contained "The Fair at the Indiction of St. Denis", "Unalterable Treason", "Three Sorcerers", "Such a Woman", "Grandmother." Another collection comprised "The Kitchen of Laughter", "The Fourth Wall", and "The School of the Stars." "The Merry Death" was first produced, April 13, 1909.

Evréinov has traveled extensively, even venturing to America. For the English reader, Mr. Sayler refers to an adequate translation of an "Introducton to Monodrama" and himself translates the preface to Evréinov's "The Representation of Love" (ed., 1910).

What, according to this essay, is the dramatist's definition of monodrama? He writes:

"I call monodrama the kind of a dramatic representation which endeavors with the greatest fulness to communicate to the spectator the soul state of the acting character, and presents on the stage the world surrounding him as he conceives it at any moment in his stage experience. Instead of the old incomplete drama, I propose the architectonics of a drama based on the principle of identifying the stage with the representation of the acting character."

A MERRY DEATH

A HARLEQUINADE

BY NICHOLAS EVRÉINOV

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY

C. E. BECHHOFER

Characters

HARLEQUIN
PIERROT
COLUMBINE
DOCTOR
DEATH

Scene: Harlequin's House

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A MERRY DEATH

Harlequin is sleeping. Pierrot clumsily chases the flies from his face, then turns to the Audience.

PIERROT. Shhh! Quiet! Take your seats quietly and try to talk and turn in your seats less. Even if an ingenuous friend has dragged you in and yourselves are too serious to be interested in a harlequinade, it's quite superfluous to hint of it to the public, which in the main has no affair with your personal tastes. Besides, Harlequin's asleep — you see him! Shh! I'll explain it all to you afterwards. But don't wake him up, please! And when Columbine comes on, don't applaud her like mad, just in order to show your neighbors that you know her, had a little intrigue with her, and can appreciate certain talents. I beg and entreat you! It's no joke. Harlequin's terribly ill! Just think, he's been raving about my Columbine, although, of course, there's nothing in common between him and my Columbine; there isn't, because Columbine's my wife, and there's an end of it! I strongly suspect that Harlequin won't live till to-morrow; a fortune-teller told him that the day he sleeps longer than he revels he will die exactly at midnight. Look, it's just eight o'clock of the evening, and he's still asleep! I'll tell you even more — I know, perhaps for sure, that Harlequin will soon die. But what decent actor will tell the Audience the end of the play before it begins? I'm not one of those who give away the management, and I thoroughly understand that the audience goes to the theater not for any idea in the piece, or masterly dialogue, but simply to know how the

play ends, and all the same I can't help sighing and weeping in my long sleeves, and saying (*sobs*): "Poor, poor Harlequin, who ever could have thought it?" I used to like him very much! He was my first friend; though, by the way, this never prevented me from envying him a little, because, as everybody knows, if I'm Pierrot, it's only because I'm not a successful Harlequin. However, I'm not as simple as my clothes, and, I assure you, I've managed already to go for a doctor, although it's useless, because Harlequin can die quite all right without a doctor; but — nice people always do it, and I'm not inferior to them; for, if I didn't behave like everybody else, I should be a bold, merry Harlequin, for whom there are no laws; but I — I'm only silly, cowardly Pierrot, whose character, by the way, will be quite clear to you in the further course of the drama, if only you stop till the end of the performance, and don't run away now from my chatter. So I'll stop it, informing you only of the following plan which came into my head entirely without outside influence: if Harlequin is fated to die exactly at midnight by this clock, then won't it be a comradely service on my part to put back the hands, even for — well, only two hours? I always liked taking people in; but when it's a matter of taking in Death and Harlequin at the same time, and, as well, for the harm of the first and the good of the second, I don't think you can call this plan anything but a genius's. Well, to work! The performance begins! (*Climbs on a stool and, stretching over the bed on which Harlequin is sleeping, puts the clock back two hours*) Poor, poor Harle — (*Falls down on the floor*) Poor Pierrot!

[*Rubs his back. Harlequin, waking, smiles, pulls Pierrot towards him by the chin, and tenderly kisses him.*

PIERROT (*naïvely*). I seem to have waked you.

HARLEQUIN. Why didn't you do it earlier?

PIERROT. What for?

HARLEQUIN. My hours are numbered.

PIERROT. Rubbish!

HARLEQUIN. I want to live them.

PIERROT. And you will.

HARLEQUIN. You nearly let me sleep them away.

PIERROT. I thought —

HARLEQUIN. What 's the time?

PIERROT. Six.

HARLEQUIN. Only?

PIERROT. Yes. How do you feel?

HARLEQUIN. Dying.

PIERROT. You're frightening me. [*Weeps.*

HARLEQUIN. Stop! Why, I'm alive! What have you done? Isn't my clock wrong?

PIERROT. I went for a doctor. Lie down quietly. I must take your temperature.

HARLEQUIN. For a doctor? (*Giggles*) Well, what of it, if he cures me —

PIERROT. Lift up your arm. That's the way. (*Applies a thermometer*) Is that someone coming?

[*The thermometer begins to burn.*

HARLEQUIN. It shows the exact temperature. (*Pierrot takes away the thermometer and puts out the flame. Harlequin jumps up and circles about, snapping his fingers*) Haha! Harlequin 's not dead yet!

PIERROT. Only a thermometer spoiled.

HARLEQUIN. Yes, I've not long to live; but (*taking down a lute*) look, how many strings are broken, and the rest are frayed! But does that stop me playing the introduction to a serenade?

[*Plays. Steps are heard to the left.*

PIERROT. D'you hear? The doctor! Stop playing and lie down quickly. It's he. I can tell people at once by their step. That could only be someone hurrying to help a friend.

HARLEQUIN (*stops playing and lies down*). To get money.

[*A knock.*

PIERROT. Come in!

DOCTOR (*in huge spectacles, bald, with a big red nose, and a syringe in a bag, comes in, stops, and sings to the Audience*).

You've only got to call me here,
And at once I'm near, at once I'm near,
At once I'm off to the invalid
To care for him and for his need.
My medicines I vary at
The rich man's house and proletariat;
But there's no need to be obscure,
I only care, but do not cure.

And grind the poor I never did,
Oh, God forbid, oh, God forbid!
For wealth from him who'd scrape any?
You take his only ha'penny.
My medicines I vary at
The rich man's house and proletariat;
But there's no need to be obscure,
I only care, but do not cure.

Good-day, my dear Harlequin. What's the matter with you?

HARLEQUIN. That's for you to judge.

DOCTOR. You're quite right. (*In Pierrot's ear*) There's never any need to contradict a patient. (*To Harlequin*) Temperature been taken?

PIERROT (*shaking his hand*). Don't inquire!

DOCTOR. How do you feel?

HARLEQUIN. An attack.

DOCTOR. Of coughing?

HARLEQUIN. Of laughing.

DOCTOR. What are you laughing at?

HARLEQUIN. You!

[*Bursts with laughter.*

DOCTOR (*to Pierrot*). He doesn't believe in medicine?

PIERROT. No, apparently only in you.

DOCTOR. What a curious invalid! Your pulse, please. Oho, I can't count quickly enough! Show your tongue.

HARLEQUIN. To whom?
DOCTOR. To me!
HARLEQUIN. Oh, to you? Delighted! [*Shows his tongue.*
DOCTOR. Thank you.
HARLEQUIN. Please. [*Shows his tongue again.*
DOCTOR. Enough, enough!
HARLEQUIN. Oh, that's quite all right! [*Shows it again*
DOCTOR. I've seen it already.
HARLEQUIN. Just as you like. [*Puts in his tongue.*
DOCTOR. I've got to listen to you.
HARLEQUIN. What shall I talk about?
DOCTOR. No, I say: I've got to listen to you.
HARLEQUIN. Well, and I ask you, what about?
DOCTOR. You don't understand me.
HARLEQUIN. You? No, no, no, never! People like me can see right through you; but people like you, I'll eat my hat, can never understand people like me!
DOCTOR. He's raving. Very well! Now, allow me to lay my head upon your heart! It's necessary in order to —
HARLEQUIN. But your wife isn't jealous?
DOCTOR. He's got a strong fever. If my ears are n't burned, it'll be a piece of luck. Yes, yes, you're very ill; but let's hope you'll soon be well. (*To Pierrot*) There's no hope; the machine is spoiled. (*To Harlequin*) You'll live a long time yet. (*To Pierrot*) He'll die very soon. (*To Harlequin*) You did very well to send for me. (*To Pierrot*) You'd better have sent for a coffin-maker. (*To Harlequin*) You've a healthy system. (*To Pierrot*) And that won't help him. (*To Harlequin*) You've only got to be cured. (*To Pierrot*) And that's no use.
HARLEQUIN. What do you advise me?
DOCTOR. You must go to bed early. No excitements. Drink absolutely nothing. Don't eat anything sharp, salt, fat, spiced, bitter, milky, over-cold, over-hot, very, very sweet, or very, very filling. Quiet habits, must n't get roused. Always mind draughts. Keep quite away from frivolity.

HARLEQUIN. Very well; but is a life like that worth living?

DOCTOR. That's your affair.

HARLEQUIN. What illness have I got?

DOCTOR. Old age.

HARLEQUIN. Why, I could be your son!

DOCTOR. You're too impudent for that. Good-by. (*To Pierrot*) And who pays for the visit?

[*Pierrot nods towards Harlequin.*

DOCTOR (*again to Harlequin*). Good-by.

HARLEQUIN. Good-by. (*Doctor goes out undecidedly, and stops*) Have you forgotten anything?

DOCTOR. Have *you* forgotten anything?

HARLEQUIN. No, nothing; I thoroughly remember all your instructions. Don't be uneasy.

DOCTOR. No, no; I'm not uneasy about that.

HARLEQUIN. Then about what?

DOCTOR. H'm. Speaking between ourselves, you've forgotten to pay me for my visit.

HARLEQUIN. Impossible! How curious!

DOCTOR. But please don't be angry with me.

HARLEQUIN. Good heavens, no!

DOCTOR. Then good-by.

HARLEQUIN (*shaking his hand feelingly*). Good-by, Doctor, good-by.

DOCTOR. H'm. You're just as forgetful again.

HARLEQUIN. Yes, yes. There's a coincidence! You're quite right. It would be impudent of me to maintain the opposite.

DOCTOR. Well, there you are; I'm reminding you.

HARLEQUIN. I'm heartily grateful.

DOCTOR. There 's no need for gratitude.

HARLEQUIN. No! Good heavens!

DOCTOR. And so — my fee?

HARLEQUIN. You'll get it when I get well, when you've cured me.

DOCTOR. Yes; but I ought to tell you that I reckon to cure all illnesses except the incurable; but yours —

HARLEQUIN. Well, then, when an improvement comes, when your advice begins to work. But then, who knows? Perhaps you lied. Why should I pay then?

DOCTOR. In that case I must inform you that — that, judging from the condition of your system, you won't live even till to-morrow.

HARLEQUIN (*jumping out of bed*). What! In that case, why the devil should I pay?

DOCTOR. But when you die who'll pay me?

HARLEQUIN. But for what, let me ask you?

DOCTOR. How, for what?

HARLEQUIN. If I actually die to-day, then what's the use of your art that can't save me from death? And if I survive, then again it's no use if it knows less than an ignorant fortune-teller.

DOCTOR. I didn't come here to talk philosophy.

HARLEQUIN. I know why you came.

DOCTOR. No insinuations, if you please.

HARLEQUIN. He calls that insinuations. (*Pulling out a purse from under his pillow*) Here's what you came for. [*Goes to the door and holds out the money.*

DOCTOR (*reaching out*). Thank you.

[*Harlequin laughs, and runs out at one side and in at the other, the Doctor after him. He does this three times, and then gives the Doctor the money.*

HARLEQUIN. What do you say to my playfulness?

DOCTOR. You know, sir — here's the best of luck in the other world — it's the first time I've seen a dying man like you. What's that noise you're making?

HARLEQUIN. That's my heart beating.

[*Noise of a steam engine.*

DOCTOR. And that?

HARLEQUIN. My breathing.

DOCTOR. And you're still on your legs?

HARLEQUIN. Oh, yes! And I've kept fairly merry, so as to meet boldly the death I desire.

DOCTOR. Why do you desire it?

HARLEQUIN. Oh, it's just coming at the right time! The man that lives wisely always desires his death.

DOCTOR. You're talking in riddles.

HARLEQUIN. Yes, for people like you. [*Laughs.*

DOCTOR. How do you know?

HARLEQUIN. If you like, I'll tell you how you'll die.

DOCTOR. Interesting.

HARLEQUIN (*lies on bed and shivers with all his body, then groans*). Oh! Ah! Ugh! I'm still so young. I haven't been able to live yet as I ought. Why have I been so abstinent all my life? I've still got all sorts of things I want to do. Turn me to the window. I'm not tired yet of looking at the world. Help! I've not been able to do half I wanted. I was never in a hurry to live because I aways forgot about death. Help, help! I haven't been able to enjoy myself yet; I've always kept my health, my strength, and my money for the morrow. I filled it with beautiful hopes, and it rolled on like a snow-ball, growing bigger and bigger. Has that morrow rolled for ever beyond the bounds of the possible? It has rolled down the slope of my mortal wisdom. Oh! Ah! Ugh! (*Twists for the last time, extends, and dies. The Doctor weeps. Harlequin, with a laugh, gets up and applauds himself*) No! Not so dies Harlequin!

DOCTOR (*weeping*). What must I do?

HARLEQUIN (*holds out his hand*). For the advice, please. I take in advance.

DOCTOR. How much?

HARLEQUIN. As much as you.

DOCTOR (*gives back his fee*). Well?

HARLEQUIN (*with importance*). Go and live. Nothing else.

DOCTOR. What does that mean?

HARLEQUIN. Well, if you don't understand, you're incurable. I tell you, go and live, but live, not like an immortal, but like a man that may die to-morrow.

DOCTOR (*shakes his head doubtfully*). H'm. I'll try it. (*Wipes his eyes*) Good-by, Mr. Harlequin.

HARLEQUIN. Good-by, Mr. Doctor. (*Exit Doctor, finger on brow*) Well, what have you got to say of it, Pierrot?

PIERROT. Nothing good.

[*It grows dark.*

HARLEQUIN. The old ape imagined I don't feel death coming. As if a man, sleeping longer than he revels, could still have doubts about the approach of death. But what's the time? (*The clock shows eight*) Has n't the clock stopped? It always went in step with me, but now —

PIERROT. You're too nervous.

HARLEQUIN. We can't all be like you.

PIERROT. What do you mean?

HARLEQUIN. You'll soon see. Help me to lay the table for supper.

PIERROT (*going to the cupboard*). With great pleasure.

HARLEQUIN. We must lay for three.

PIERROT. Three?

HARLEQUIN. Yes.

PIERROT. Whom's the third for?

HARLEQUIN. For Death.

PIERROT. She'll sit down with us?

HARLEQUIN. If you're not afraid of her.

PIERROT. Two glasses are enough; I won't have supper with you.

HARLEQUIN. Come, come! I was joking. Death will sup on me. That's sufficient for her. But, all the same, lay for three.

[*Lights the lamp.*

PIERROT. But whom's the third for?

COLUMBINE'S voice (*sings*).

I from my husband unsuspected
Steal to another 'neath the moon;
When desire 's interdicted,
Doubly 't is desired soon.
Ah, my heart is trembling,
Fainting, beating slow —
If my spouse should see me,
Should hearken, and should know.

PIERROT. What's that? Columbine's voice! My wife's voice!

HARLEQUIN. Now you know whom the third place is for.

PIERROT (*tragically*). A-ah! Traitor! A-ah! Demon! This is your friendship!

HARLEQUIN. Be calm. Why, nothing's happened yet!

PIERROT. It only wants that!

HARLEQUIN. And if I were to say that it doesn't even want that?

PIERROT. And you dare pretend that you love me!

HARLEQUIN. I love you both. But you want it to be only you, and so you're jealous.

PIERROT. You know very well how, of whom, and why I'm jealous.

HARLEQUIN. Be sensible. If you love me and love Columbine, you ought to be happy for both our sakes. Besides, you know we both love you. So what is there to be sad about? Lay a third place.

PIERROT. No, I'm not so simple. Nice people don't behave like that, and there's nothing else left for me than to revenge myself on you.

HARLEQUIN. In what way?

PIERROT. By death.

HARLEQUIN. But it'll come soon anyhow — my hours are numbered. Who will prevent you afterwards from telling everybody that it was the work of your hands?

PIERROT. Suppose —

HARLEQUIN. Come, what is there to talk about? Lay a third place.

PIERROT (*considering*). Yes, but —

HARLEQUIN. Come, come. Time's precious. (*Pierrot fetches the plates and drops them*) Butterfingers! You were bound to smash 'em.

PIERROT (*pathetically*). It's not for you to reproach me! You've destroyed my happiness.

HARLEQUIN (*laying the third place*). No phrases, please! You've been cold with Columbine for a long time, and

you're only jealous because it's good manners. But, shh!

COLUMBINE'S voice.

Columbine has donned her mask
And is clad in motley gear, O,
Wants to see her Harlequin
But's afraid of meeting Pierrot.
Ah, her heart is trembling,
Fainting, beating slow —
If her spouse should see her,
Should hearken, and should know.

HARLEQUIN. I'm going to meet Columbine; you look after the lamp. [*Exit.*

PIERROT. H'm. Look after the lamp! (*Suddenly strikes his forehead*) Wouldn't it be better to look after the clock? Well, if Harlequin's death ought to be the work of my hands, very well! Ladies and gentlemen, you are my witnesses! I don't leave that sort of thing unpunished — I'll put the hands on two hours. (*Does so*) Ah! Harlequin, evidently no one can escape his fate. Now I'm quite calm: I'm revenged. Interesting to see how she'll look at me. This way, please, Madame Traitress.

HARLEQUIN (*off*). Don't be afraid, Columbine! Go in fearlessly. I've persuaded him, and, word of honor, he's consented.

COLUMBINE (*enters*). Consented?! Here's a fine thing! Consented! What, you little beast, that's all you think of your wife! You don't care if she betrays you? You don't care? Answer! [*Beats Pierrot.*

PIERROT (*agonized*). But listen, Columbine.

COLUMBINE. What? I must listen to you? Listen to the worst little beast of a husband of all little beasts of husbands? —

PIERROT. But, Columbine.

COLUMBINE. Blockhead!

PIERROT. You don't let me utter a word.

COLUMBINE (*beats him*). You've got no excuse! And I, poor thing, married a little beast like you! Gave you all the best there was in me! And he can't even stand up for my conjugal honor! Take that, and that, and that, you good-for-nothing!

PIERROT. But that's too much! Harlequin, protect me.

HARLEQUIN. This is your own business.

PIERROT. Yes, but, dear old chap —

HARLEQUIN. I haven't been brought up to interfere in other people's private matters.

COLUMBINE (*to Pierrot*). There, that's how you love me! That's how jealous you are of me! Where are your vows, you pagan?

PIERROT (*coming to himself*). Oh, to hell with this, I never heard of such a thing! Why, you impudent woman, you came here yourself to a rendezvous, and yet you dare say —

COLUMBINE. That's enough! Be quiet! I know the little ways of rogues like you: when you're found out you start to find fault with the innocent, so as to get out of the difficulty. But you don't deceive me, you good-for-nothing.

HARLEQUIN (*interposing*). Friends, don't let's waste precious time! When supper's waiting, is it worth while spoiling one's appetite?

COLUMBINE and PIERROT. But it *is* irritating!

HARLEQUIN. I don't like to see quarrels starting.

COLUMBINE and PIERROT. It's not my fault.

HARLEQUIN. Better make friends!

COLUMBINE and PIERROT. Not for anything.

HARLEQUIN. What obstinacy!

COLUMBINE and PIERROT. I've been wounded in my finest feelings.

HARLEQUIN. Come, enough.

COLUMBINE and PIERROT. No.

COLUMBINE. First he ought to be punished.

HARLEQUIN. In what way?

COLUMBINE. Kiss me, Harlequin! Dear, sweet Harlequin.

HARLEQUIN. Not to offend you with a refusal — (*Kisses her*) I was always an obliging cavalier. (*Kisses her*) Besides that, I've got a tender heart. (*Kisses her*) Even children know it. (*Kisses her*) And finally, as host — (*kisses her*) — I ought to be polite to my guests — (*kisses her*) — especially when it concerns — (*kisses her*) — the fair sex. [*Kisses her.*

PIERROT. Wretches! They don't suspect that I'm already revenged, and so can be absolutely calm.

COLUMBINE (*to Harlequin*). Kiss me more warmly, more strongly, more painfully, almost biting me, without losing breath.

[*Is kissed as she desires.*

PIERROT. They imagine they're mortally provoking me.

COLUMBINE (*to Harlequin*). Once more! Once more! (*To Pierrot*) Oh! you unfeeling log!

PIERROT. Please do what you like. (*To Audience*) My conscience is clean; I have vindicated my honor and have nothing to worry about.

COLUMBINE (*to Harlequin*). Kiss my eyes, my forehead, my cheeks, my chin, my temples.

[*Harlequin does not wait to be asked a second time.*

PIERROT (*to Audience*). Gentlemen, you are witnesses that I've taken my revenge.

COLUMBINE (*to Harlequin*). Kiss my neck where the hair ends and where a sweet shivering comes from your kisses.

PIERROT. I don't care. Let them do as they want. I have fulfilled the duty of an affronted husband, and never felt better in my life.

COLUMBINE (*stamping at Pierrot*). There, you brute! Is all this nothing to you?

PIERROT (*to Audience*). I'm wearing them out with my nonchalance.

COLUMBINE (*to Harlequin*). Well, shall we celebrate our Dance of Love, in spite of him?

HARLEQUIN. I don't dare refuse you, but —

COLUMBINE. What "but"?

HARLEQUIN. But if Pierrot is n't such a lover of dancing as to forget everything in the world!

PIERROT. Please, don't mind me! (*To Audience*) I'm revenged for everything in advance, and need n't be disturbed, whatever happens.

HARLEQUIN (*giving him the lute*). Perhaps you'll accompany us?

COLUMBINE. Of course! Is he to do nothing?

PIERROT. With the greatest pleasure, if it helps you. (*To Audience*) I hope you understand what a matter of indifference this is to a husband who can vindicate his wounded honor.

COLUMBINE. Play!

PIERROT (*to Audience*). Lord, how easy you are, when you're revenged, and nobody has any right to laugh at you. [*Plays vigorously. Dance. Suddenly Harlequin falls in a faint on the bed. Pierrot stops playing.*

COLUMBINE. What's happened to you? What's the matter?

HARLEQUIN (*holding his heart*). No — it's nothing, — a trifle. [*His heart beats like a sledge-hammer, and he breathes like an engine.*

COLUMBINE. How furiously your heart's beating! What terrible breathing!

PIERROT (*to Audience, joyfully*). Harlequin's giving in. Harlequin's weakening. Rejoice with me, poor husbands — you whose wives are in danger!

COLUMBINE (*to Harlequin*). Nothing like this has ever happened to you before.

PIERROT (*to Audience*). By the way, don't be angry with me, because, after all, Harlequin's my friend, and there's an end of it. I'm not going to quarrel with him, indeed, for a harlot! And if he's more to Columbine's taste than I, he's not to blame, but Columbine, for having such bad taste. By the way, I said this from envy. [*Reflects.*

HARLEQUIN (*stands up and smiles, and kisses Columbine*).

Come, did I frighten you? Well, forgive me. (*Looks at the clock, which is nearing twelve*) Soon you'll know the real reason.

COLUMBINE. What's the matter?

HARLEQUIN. Let's sit down to supper. The dance woke up my appetite, and I feel magnificent.

[*They sit down and eat and drink.*

COLUMBINE. What are you hiding from me?

HARLEQUIN. Come, drink, Columbine, drink! When there's good wine on the table, there's no need to worry about anything.

[*Kisses her.*

PIERROT (*to Audience*). Oh, Lord, I'm undergoing incredible pangs of conscience. To think only of the harm I've caused Harlequin! And what for? What for? I can't swallow a thing, and I don't know how to look at Harlequin! I'd willingly confess my wicked crime to him now! But alas! I can't do it, because what would my revenge come to then? And I can't go without revenging myself. I'm a deceived husband, and ought to revenge myself, because all nice people do. Oh, how unhappy I am, and how I want to cry! (*Threatens the Audience with his fist*) Bad, wicked people, it's you thought out such silly rules! It's because of you I've got to take the life of my best friend!

[*Turns his back on the public.*

HARLEQUIN (*to Columbine*). Why were you late to-day?

COLUMBINE. I was detained by the Doctor — I met him quite near here. He was dancing and limping and drunk and accosting all the girls.

HARLEQUIN. Well?

COLUMBINE. He prayed me to make him happy. He assured me that he was very strong and had been very handsome thirty years ago. While I was showing him that I wasn't a historian to be captivated by antiquity, time passed and I was late.

HARLEQUIN (*to Audience*). Poor Doctor! Why didn't he come to me earlier for advice?

COLUMBINE. I was very sorry for him.

HARLEQUIN (*to Audience*). Your elbow 's near and yet you can't bite it!

COLUMBINE. He was weeping and crying: "Why the devil did I preserve my strength?" And I answered him: "I have respect for your wrinkles, but not passion."

HARLEQUIN. But you know, Columbine, he is younger than I, though twice as old in years.

COLUMBINE. I don't understand you.

HARLEQUIN. Because you haven't meditated on real old age. (*Tapping Pierrot on shoulder*) But why aren't you drinking or eating and taking part in our conversation?

COLUMBINE. He wants to depress us, but he shan't, the good-for-nothing!

PIERROT (*weeping*). You don't understand, poor thing, that Harlequin's dying.

COLUMBINE. Dying? You horrid thing! Or have you put poison in our glasses? No, no (*contemptuously*); men like you aren't capable of that.

PIERROT (*all in tears*). Poor Harlequin, your minutes are numbered!

COLUMBINE. What 's he say? What 's he making up?

HARLEQUIN (*turning to the clock*). Yes, Columbine, it 's true. It 's time for you to know it. I feel plainly that I shall soon die.

COLUMBINE. Harlequin! Beloved!

HARLEQUIN. Don't cry, Columbine! I shall go away with a smile on my lips. I want to die as people want to sleep, when it 's late and they 're tired and need rest. I 've sung all my songs! I 've reveled all my merriment! I 've laughed all my laughter! My strength and health have been joyfully spent with my money. I was never mean, and so was always merry and sorrowless. I am Harlequin, and shall die Harlequin. Don't cry, Columbine! Rather be glad that I 'm dying, not like others, but full of delight, content with fate and my conduct. Or would you rather see me grappling to life with greedy

eyes and a prayer on my lips? No, Harlequin is not like that. He has fulfilled his mission in life, and dies calmly. And, really, didn't I give my kisses to who wanted them? Didn't I lavish my soul for the good of others? How many wives of ugly husbands I consoled! And how many little hats did I make for people who thought themselves sages! How many I awoke to passionate song or rattling rage! To how many I gave an example! Now I have outlived my life, and only the husk is left for death! "Catch the moments" — that's my motto! And I have not been idle to catch them! I've caught so many that I want no more. Now, perhaps, another kiss, a little draught of wine, a burst of merry laughter — and it will be!

COLUMBINE. But aren't you afraid?

HARLEQUIN. It would be more frightful to be born! Now I'm going back again.

COLUMBINE. To sink into nothing!

HARLEQUIN. But if Death's nothing, *what* have I to fear?

COLUMBINE. Anyhow, I'm afraid.

HARLEQUIN. Your bowl's not emptied; you're afraid not to be ready.

COLUMBINE. But only think —

HARLEQUIN. It thinks for us.

COLUMBINE. But we?

HARLEQUIN. We'll remember the march of the clock — the swift march of the clock! Stretch out, Columbine! Press the clusters of life! Turn them to wine! Don't tarry for delight, so as to be sated when Death comes! (*Takes the lute*) And you, too, stretch out, friend Pierrot, if only you can. (*Pierrot, in reply, sobs. Harlequin laughs*) No, no, not like that; you don't understand me.

PIERROT. The lamp's flickering.

HARLEQUIN. And there's no oil in the house.

COLUMBINE. But look, it's still burning!

HARLEQUIN. It's burning, Columbine, burning!

[*Begins to play. The strings break.*

COLUMBINE (*sorrowfully*). The strings have broken.

HARLEQUIN (*laughs*). My catch is sung. (*A knock*) Who 's there? (*Death enters. Harlequin rises to meet her. He is very gallant*) To do justice, Madame, you have come just in time. We were only just talking about you. Really, how obliging you are, not to keep yourself waiting! But why these tragic gestures? Look round, Madame; you are in the house of Harlequin, where one can laugh at all that 's tragic, not ever excluding your gestures. (*Death points at the clock with a theatrical gesture*) Enough, enough, Madame. Really, if I had n't laughed all my laughter, I should burst of laughing in the literal sense of the word. What, you want to stop the clock? There 's plenty of time, Madame. As far as I know, my hour has not yet struck. Or you 're anticipating a struggle with me? No, no; I don't belong to the silly bourgeois boors. Honor and place to a beautiful lady! I don't want to cross her, and then I can't oppose her, because I 've used up all my strength. But the traditional dance? Your dance of the good old times, when people had n't yet forgotten how to die, and even Death was a distraction for them. If you please! Ah, you 're surprised at the request! Yes, yes, Harlequin in our time is almost a fossil. Well, fair lady, enough obstinacy. (*Music. Death dances*) Columbine, Pierrot, open your eyes, open them quickly! Look how merry we are! (*Harlequin makes Columbine sit down beside him on the bed. Death places her hand on his shoulder. To Death*) Wait, my dear lady, wait. Let me take leave of the world as the world does! One more, only one more kiss, Columbine! Pierrot, where have you got to, you coward? (*Rises*) Well, if you 're too lazy to light me. (*Gives the lamp to Death*) Light the way, Death; there 's still a tiny drop of oil in the lamp. [*Death separates him from Columbine.*

COLUMBINE (*as in a dream*). My Harlequin! My beloved! [*The lamp goes out. Then the moon lights up the stage. It is twelve o'clock. Columbine is kneeling at Harlequin's death-bed. Pierrot comes in on the right.*

PIERROT (*to Audience*). Here 's a situation. I really don't know what I ought to bewail first: the loss of Harlequin, the loss of Columbine, my own bitter lot or yours, dear Audience, who have witnessed the performance of such an unserious author. And what did he want to say in his piece? — I don't understand. By the way, I 'm silly, cowardly Pierrot, and it 's not for me to criticize the piece in which I played an unenviable rôle. But your astonishment will increase still more when you know what I have been told to say in conclusion by the culprit of this — well, between ourselves — this strange mockery of the public. Shhh! Listen! "When the genius Rabelais was dying, the monks collected round his couch and tried in every way to induce him to do penance for his sins. Rabelais, in reply, only smiled, and when the moment of the end came, he said mockingly: 'Let down the curtain; the farce is over.' He said this and died." Why the graceless author thought it necessary to put other people's words into the mouth of one of the actors, I don't know — I've not a free hand in the matter; but, being a respectable actor, I stand by him to the last and so, obeying without dispute the will of the author, I shout mockingly: Let down the curtain; the farce is over. (*The curtains fall behind him*) Ladies and gentlemen, I forgot to tell you that neither your applause nor your hissing of the piece is likely to be taken seriously by the author, who preaches that nothing in life is worth taking seriously. And I suggest that if truth is on his side, then you should hardly take his play seriously, all the more as Harlequin has probably risen from his death-bed already, and, perhaps, is already tidying himself in anticipation of a call, because, say what you like, but the actors can't be responsible for the free-thinking of the author.

[*Exit.*

CURTAIN

BY THEIR WORDS YE SHALL KNOW THEM

SERAFÍN AND JOAQUÍN QUINTERO

Serafín (1871) and Joaquín (1873) Quintero have done much, so claims John Garrett Underhill, to lift the *género chico* from its overpopularized form. He proceeds to define this type as "art for the masses, at least art brought within the reach of all." In an entertaining discussion of "The One-Act Play in Spain", Mr. Underhill calls attention to the popular character of the short drama among a people who have never responded vitally to the realism of Ibsen or to the symbolism of Maeterlinck, but who have made of the popular theater a place where anything of "short length", whether one or two acts, will find a ready audience. In fact the system of paying royalties is based on the number of acts a play contains. In this way, the popular theater in Spain finds a somewhat analogous comparison with our vaudeville houses and moving-picture halls, where audiences may be disgorged as often as practical to fit financial policies.

Such a system has proven financially lucrative to the Spanish theater-manager. With the result that the one- and two-act plays were encouraged, and the popular theaters increased rapidly. Such development was to the detriment of the regular theater. Most of the Spanish authors of prominence, like Vital Asa, Ramos-Carrión, José Echegaray, the Quinteros, Santiago Rusiñol, Martínez Sierra, and Benevente have done work in the popular vein.

The Quinteros have written jointly a large number of such pieces. The bibliography of Spanish titles is large. They have catered not only to the popular drama form but

to the native operetta as well. They have written in Andalusian dialect. There is a theater in Madrid known as the Teatro Alvárez Quintero. Says one writer of the two brothers, "They reflect the spirit of joyous innkeepers, they picture the pretty, pure-hearted young girls of the people, they have conceived a whole gallery of Dickens types." They have no lofty aspirations like Galdós, they are not penetratingly cynical like Benevente. They are wholly popular. In this, they satisfy the Spanish public, which, according to Elizabeth Wallace, "though characterized by a warm, unembarrassed, exuberant southern sensuality, is nevertheless essentially modest. [The Spaniard] cannot look upon irregularities as serious problems, . . . nor does he wish to theorize about himself in intellectual subtleties. Therefore he was slow to appreciate the modern French realistic play; in fact, he never did adopt it in its original and unadulterated forms."

As illustration of popular Spanish drama, the Quinteros are essential to such a collection of short plays as this.

WORKS

Malvaloca. Translated by J. S. Basset, Jr. With an Introduction by John Garrett Underhill. Doubleday, Page and Company, Garden City, 1916. *Drama League Series of Plays.*

Papa Juan; or, The Centenarian. Richard G. Badger, Boston. *Poet Lore* Plays.

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By Their Words Ye Shall Know Them. See present Collection. Translated by John Garrett Underhill.

BY THEIR WORDS YE SHALL KNOW THEM

BY SERAFÍN AND JOAQUÍN ALVAREZ QUINTERO

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY

JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL

Characters

MANOLITA
ENRIQUE
CEROTE

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BY THEIR WORDS YE SHALL KNOW THEM

A corner of the patio, or courtyard, of an apartment house in Seville. The entrance from the street is upon the actors' right; Manolita's room is at the rear. It is morning on a fine day in the month of October. Manolita is seated before her door, sewing. She is a coy beauty whose nose is completely hidden from view by her long lashes whenever she closes her eyes.

MANOLITA (*singing to herself*).

Of course you never loved her,
Never went to see her;
Grass on city sidewalks
Never ought to be there.

(*She looks off towards the left*) Here comes the shoemaker. I wonder why they call him *Zerote?* He seems very nice. I like him, I like him; that is all there is about it. He has a way that is fascinating. Whenever he goes out and passes me at the door, he always tells me the same thing. (*She imitates Zerote*) "You strike me dumb!" Not that there is anything particular in it, but I like it. "Dumb and blind!" It pleases me.

[*Cerote, the shoemaker, enters from the left. In one hand he carries a large handkerchief by the four corners, containing some specimens of his craft — who can say whether a pair of buckled shoes for some canon, or two slippers for the tiny feet of a fair Sevillana? As he passes Manolita, he is unable to restrain the usual expression of his enthusiasm.*

CEROTE. Dumb and blind!

MANOLITA. Nonsense, *Zerote!*

CEROTE (*already at the street door*). Dumb and blind!

MANOLITA. What am I going to do with you, *Zerote?* (*She*

laughs as Cerote goes out) No, that is as far as he gets. It amuses me. He has a way that is simply fascinating. Oh, *Zerote!* What makes them call him *Zerote?* (*Resuming her singing*)

. . . Never went to see her.
Grass on city sidewalks
Never ought to be there.

(*Suddenly she looks up again towards the left, this time with an expression of petulance*) Ah! the new neighbor! Did you ever see such a man? How busy he is! He has been a month in the house, and he has never had time to say good-morning to me. He behaves as if he had swallowed the ruler. Look at him, look at him, will you? — as serious as a turnip! He has a face as flat as a tile. Even the way he walks makes me tired. If he were the only man in Seville I should enter a convent and be done with it — join the Sisters of Charity. I can't bear the sight of him. Those grapes that I ate are certainly going to sour on my stomach.

[*She jumps up and runs into the house. Enrique, the new neighbor, enters from the left, fingering the papers in his pocketbook, which he then restores to his pocket. He is dressed after the manner of the Andalusian workingman. His air is serious and industrious.*

ENRIQUE. The landlady's daughter has run away already. She thinks that I am going to eat her up. She needn't worry, I don't like pancakes; there is nothing to her. It's a pity that she hasn't a brother to teach her a few things and show her what to do for herself.

[*He goes out into the street, still preoccupied. Manolita reappears immediately.*

MANOLITA. He gets on my nerves. I can't help it. Look! he is disagreeable even when you can only see his back. What do you suppose he is doing now? — taking that pocketbook out again? How important he is with that old pocketbook! He takes it out ten or a dozen times

every day. It would be all right with a watch — but a pocketbook! — I hear he colors lithographs. I'd like to see anything that was colored by him. What's the matter now? Has he lost anything? No wonder — taking his pocketbook out all the time. He is looking everywhere on the ground. — Here he comes again! Hurry! No — I'm not going this time. I don't see any reason why I should jump up and down because he happens to feel like it.

(*She returns to her chair and sits down, after stamping her foot, greatly irritated; then she resumes her sewing, making no effort to conceal her annoyance, which seems excessive. She has scarcely taken up the needle when she pricks one of her fingers and puts it into her mouth*) Ay!

[*Enrique reappears, scrutinizing the ground intently for the article which apparently he has lost.*

ENRIQUE. I must have dropped it between my room and the street. The devil! I should hate to lose it.

[*He stops a moment in the corner of the patio, and then goes out to the left, looking carefully.*

MANOLITA. I'm glad of it! I'm glad of it! I'm glad of it! The kill-joy! What do you suppose he has lost? Somebody's picture? No; because no matter how small it was, you could see it, even if it was n't full figure. — Ah! Now I know! It's a medal; I can see it shine. — Yes, you had better look for it — you will never find it out there. Here he comes again. Shall I tell him? No — Yes — No! Just out of spite, I shan't tell him.

[*Enrique reënters, still searching for the medal, and visibly disturbed.*

ENRIQUE. God bless me! I am going to get into trouble if I don't find it. (*Manolita, who at last begins to feel sorry for him, endeavors to indicate the place where the lost article lies, by repeated glances in that direction; then by nodding her head. When he discovers what she is doing, he thinks that she is making fun of him and eyes her with disapproval*) Why don't you get a monkey to amuse you, young lady?

MANOLITA. I wonder. Did you hear the old porcupine? When I am trying to tell you where the medal is, is that the way you treat me? You can look now until your eyes are out, if you want to, before you find it. (*She returns to her sewing, full of rage and indignation, and pricks herself again*) Ay!

ENRIQUE. Did you prick yourself?

MANOLITA. No, sir; you pricked yourself.

ENRIQUE. Brilliant, young lady!

MANOLITA. Of course, brilliance is nothing to you. You are like a grindstone. I hold the scissors near you and watch the sparks fly.

ENRIQUE. Did you say that you saw it over here?

MANOLITA (*singing under her breath, without paying any attention to him*).

Up, up, Mariana, up
Over the mountain side,
Up —

ENRIQUE. What are you doing?

MANOLITA. Helping Mariana up. You heard me.

ENRIQUE. What?

MANOLITA. Laughing at the monkey I have to amuse myself with.

ENRIQUE. Oh, very well!

[*He continues looking for the medal.*

MANOLITA. Cold, cold, cold —

ENRIQUE. Young lady, I asked no favors of you.

MANOLITA. And I haven't done you any. I only said "cold, cold, cold" because the words came into my head. Just the same as I might have said "warm, warm, warm" — (*Enrique looks at her, annoyed, and continues his search*) You certainly have fine eyesight. Did you say you were a painter? (*Enrique looks at her again*) I suppose you paint doors — all one color from the top to the bottom? (*The youth looks at her again*) Why don't you light a match? Let me get you a candle. No, it's no use. A

penny for the souls in purgatory, or you will never find it! (*She gets up nervously, unable to restrain herself any longer, and picks up the medal, which is very small, from the ground, showing it to Enrique*) See! here it is. (*Examining it*) Isn't it lovely? Holy Saint Anthony! (*She wipes and kisses it*) For you.

ENRIQUE. Thanks.

MANOLITA. For what?

ENRIQUE. You can't imagine how much obliged I am.

MANOLITA. I am glad of it. (*Noticing that Enrique is about to kiss the medal*) Don't you kiss it, because I might have some disease or other that sticks, and you might catch it, which would be a pity.

ENRIQUE. Never mind.

[*He kisses the medal and puts it away.*

MANOLITA. I would never have believed it if I had n't seen it.

ENRIQUE. Why not?

MANOLITA. Why not? After rushing past my door every day as if I had the plague?

ENRIQUE. Do I?

MANOLITA. Yes, you do — without even saying good morning.

ENRIQUE. I don't say good morning because you no sooner see me coming than you run in so as not to give me a chance.

MANOLITA. I run in because I don't like the way you walk. You walk like this — as if you had a stitch in your side from lying in bed with a cramp.

ENRIQUE. Maybe I do. You can't expect me to stop and pat every pet that happens along.

MANOLITA. Are you comparing me to a cat? How polite!

ENRIQUE. Like the shoemaker there, who tells you something nice every time he goes by.

MANOLITA. Who? *Zerote?* You are not comparing yourself with *Zerote*, are you? "Dumb and blind!"

ENRIQUE. He is?

MANOLITA. No. Something else.

ENRIQUE. However, you are wrong. I am not comparing myself with *Zerote.*

MANOLITA. Gracious! But you are proud.

ENRIQUE. Neither proud nor humble; I don't care to be like him, that 's all.

MANOLITA. Envy or pity, neighbor?

ENRIQUE. I don't envy him his disposition; as for his clothes—

MANOLITA. I should think that a man with your disposition might envy anybody.

ENRIQUE. There are plenty of reasons why my disposition should not be any better than it is, neighbor.

MANOLITA. At any rate, a person could see you were serious a mile off.

ENRIQUE. I am not a fool; and I don't intend to be one. Anyway, nobody can see into anybody's life; nobody knows anything about anybody; nobody can enter into the thoughts of anybody; and nobody is in a position to say anything about anybody.

MANOLITA. But you know you are not anybody.

ENRIQUE. I am pretty lonely here, as you see.

MANOLITA. I don't see anything.

ENRIQUE. You might very easily. My father lives at Mairena, where he makes things as unpleasant as he can for my mother. I have a sister here in Seville, who is unhappily married, who relies on me for support; and my little brother is off at the war, suffering the pangs of purgatory — my mother sent me this medal for him — and within the next day or two I shall have to give the proprietor of the shop where I work a sound beating. Then you expect me to strut out of my room to the street every day with all this on my mind, and tell you good morning while I do the steps of a *sevillana!*

MANOLITA. I expect nothing of the sort. I had no idea that you were in so much trouble. You are a perfect martyr.

ENRIQUE. I have enough on my mind, I can tell you.

MANOLITA. Well, I certainly never dreamed it — and other people have everything to make them happy!

ENRIQUE. God keep you till the end of the world.

MANOLITA. Thank you so much!

ENRIQUE. You are living in glory already. All you need to do is to look in the mirror when you get up in the morning, and you are happy for the rest of the day.

MANOLITA. Thanks.

ENRIQUE. In the summer time you can sit in the shade of your eyelashes and enjoy the cool breezes.

MANOLITA. Thanks. Do you know, I like you better the more I hear you talk?

ENRIQUE. I feel the same about you. To tell the truth, you never seemed to me to be a saint. You were too much taken up with yourself.

MANOLITA. I? With myself? Did you say taken up with myself? Why should I be taken up with myself?

ENRIQUE. You have the appearance, at least. Take your nose; nothing could be more impertinent.

MANOLITA (*patting her nose*). He calls you impertinent.

ENRIQUE. I always thought, "The landlady's daughter may be a good-looker —"

MANOLITA. And pass in a crowd.

ENRIQUE. "But she is not inviting."

MANOLITA. The same, the very same that I thought about you, when I saw you moping around all the time: "that new neighbor of ours must take his meals by hypodermic; he never opens his mouth."

ENRIQUE. We were both mistaken.

MANOLITA. No; because I don't think you are a very great talker.

ENRIQUE. I am when I feel like it; I am talking now.

MANOLITA. Yes, you are, now.

ENRIQUE. Because I am enjoying myself.

MANOLITA. Not really?

ENRIQUE. I feel like a man who has been thoroughly chilled and then goes into a room where there is a fire — yes, where there is a hot fire. I can feel the heat.

MANOLITA. But where is the stove?

ENRIQUE. Have a light? We have all the materials. What beautiful eyes you have, neighbor!

MANOLITA. I told you I liked you better the more I heard you talk. You are another man. What do you like so much about my eyes?

ENRIQUE. I can't say — there is something about them — they look like new — Did you get them to-day?

MANOLITA. Oh, no! I've had them a long while. The color is fast — that's all. But I am glad now that I know you. I used to feel terribly mournful whenever you went by. I said to my mother once — you can ask her if you want to — "What a pity that such a disagreeable, self-satisfied man should be so nice looking!"

ENRIQUE. Did I seem disagreeable to you?

MANOLITA. Uh! I could have choked you — especially on Sundays. That red necktie and your silk handkerchief folded up neatly and sticking out of your pocket were enough to provoke murder. You were always so important and dignified.

ENRIQUE. Well, now you understand the reason. It's all a question of character, the way you are made. You are born with a certain kind of disposition, you go through life with that disposition, and you die with the disposition that you had. Of course, when a man is lucky, he can run down the street telling people about it, no matter what his disposition may be; but if things go wrong and he has nothing but trouble, the best thing that he can do is to keep still and shoulder it alone.

MANOLITA. They say you don't mind so much when you tell your troubles.

ENRIQUE. So they say. But you have to find someone who is willing to listen first, and who won't laugh at you.

MANOLITA. Who would ever laugh at such things? I am sure I never laughed at you because you were in trouble.

ENRIQUE. But how was I to know?

MANOLITA. Somebody is telling you who does know.

ENRIQUE. I shan't forget, either.

MANOLITA. Have you a good memory?

ENRIQUE. Like every man who is grateful.

MANOLITA. I am so glad.

ENRIQUE. Since I am lonely and you are so agreeable, I don't suppose this will be the last time that we shall talk together.

MANOLITA. Something may happen.

ENRIQUE. What do you mean?

MANOLITA. Nothing. A saying in mother's family; she's from Benacasón.

ENRIQUE. How about my being disagreeable?

MANOLITA. Taken back.

ENRIQUE. How about my being so serious and self-satisfied? And the way that I walk?

MANOLITA. Taken back. How about my being taken up with myself, and my impertinent nose?

ENRIQUE. Taken back entirely! Your nose impertinent? Your nose is a downtrodden slave watched over by two deadly black eyes!

MANOLITA. We are coming to an understanding.

ENRIQUE. By their words ye shall know them.

MANOLITA. What do you think of my being so friendly with our new neighbor?

ENRIQUE. What do you think of my wasting my time talking with the landlady's daughter? It is too foolish!

MANOLITA. Laugh while you can, for this isn't the end of it. You can't swallow me all at one dose like a teaspoonful of soda!

[*They both laugh.*

ENRIQUE. You don't mind if I don't, do you?

MANOLITA. Praise God!

ENRIQUE. Are we friends, then?

MANOLITA. We are.

ENRIQUE. I'll work to-day as I never worked before. I am glad I lost that medal of Saint Anthony.

MANOLITA. I am glad I found it.

ENRIQUE. And I am glad that you gave it a kiss.

MANOLITA. Just as you did.

ENRIQUE. Alongside of yours. I was careful to choose a good place.

MANOLITA. I wonder if this is another miracle of Saint Anthony's?

ENRIQUE. We shall see. He has had some experience in miracles.

MANOLITA. And makes no mistakes.

ENRIQUE. It is good-by, then?

MANOLITA. Good-by.

ENRIQUE. Give me your hand.

MANOLITA. There. (*They take each other's hands, and for a moment cannot bring themselves to let go*) Let go, now, or you will be late at the shop, and the master won't like it.

ENRIQUE. This is the day that I knock the master over the head!

MANOLITA. God bless you! (*Detaining Enrique in the doorway*) Here! — Wait. — I forgot. What is your name?

ENRIQUE. That 's so. Mine? Enrique.

MANOLITA (*delighted with the name*). Enrique!

ENRIQUE. And yours?

MANOLITA. Mine? Manolita.

ENRIQUE (*as pleased as she*). Manolita!

MANOLITA. Enrique what?

ENRIQUE. Enrique Ortega. And yours? Manolita what?

MANOLITA. Manolita Sepero. Enrique Ortega what?

ENRIQUE. Enrique Ortega Caravaca.

MANOLITA. And mine? Manolita Sepero Murillo.

ENRIQUE. I knew you were a Murillo by the mother's side. Good-by.

[*He goes out, gazing at her.*

MANOLITA. Good-by. — He is not the same man, not the same man! What a nice fellow! So well educated! What a way he has with him! It is all lovely — fascinating! Another man, another man!

[*At this opportune moment Cerote returns. Naturally, as he*

passes Manolita, he greets her with the accustomed exclamation.

CEROTE. Dumb and blind!

MANOLITA (*glaring at him as if she would eat him up*). Ave María. Is that all you can say? You clumsy old shoemaker! Yes, "Dumb and blind!" "Dumb and blind!" Always the same thing! If I have eyes, let me tell you, I don't use them looking at you. Get out!

CEROTE (*disconcerted at the unexpected rebuff*). Oh, very well! Excuse me. I thought you liked it so much, "Dumb and blind!" There is no accounting for the tastes of women.

[*He goes off.*

MANOLITA. That man is the devil! He is so civil that he fairly reeks of it. I can't abide him. He is stupid and disagreeable on purpose! I know now why they call him *Zerote*. But Enrique Ortega Caravaca is a perfect darling! (*To the audience*)

Pray take my advice, if advice will avail,
And a simple young maid who has reasons may show them;
No man in the world may be judged without fail
At a distance. By their words ye shall know them.

CURTAIN

THE LOVER

GREGORIO MARTÍNEZ SIERRA

(1881–)

A COLLECTION of plays by Martínez Sierra, translated by H. Granville-Barker and John Garrett Underhill, is scheduled for early publication. In it there will be biographical material for the English reader. Mr. Underhill, to whom all students of the Spanish drama are beholden for his discriminating work in two volumes of plays by Jacinto Benevente, has kindly furnished the present editor with the following random notes.

Martínez Sierra was born at Madrid, March 6, 1881, and received his education at the University of Madrid. His precocious literary career began at an early age; and he came under the influence of the French school, his impressionistic prose and prose poetry showing how imitative of others he was. Admiration for Maurice Maeterlinck prompted him to translate the "Belgian Shakespeare" into Spanish, and, as a result, he has sponsored five volumes of the works of the Belgian mystic.

As early as the age of seventeen, he issued his first volume, "The Song of Labor" (El Poema del Trabáso), 1898. Essays and stories followed, and these were gathered later into several volumes, the best of which is "Declining Sun" (Sol de la Tarde), 1904. This established his reputation, which was further enhanced by two novels, "The Humble Truth", 1904, and "Peace" (Tú eres la Paz), 1907. At this time he lived with the lyric poet, Júan Ramón Jiménez, under whose influence he wrote the verses contained in a volume

entitled "La Casa de la Primavera." His "Dream Theater" (Teatro de Ensueño), in which the dialogue is mystical and colorful, was consciously modeled on Maeterlinck and Benevente's "Teatro Fantástico."

As an actor, Martínez Sierra, in 1899, joined the Art Theater, which had been organized at Madrid by Benevente. With the Catalan painter and playwright, Santiago Rusiñol, he now wrote his first play, "Vida and Dulzura", which was acted at Madrid in 1907. With the same collaborator, he wrote two other pieces in the Catalan dialect, produced at Barcelona.

"La Sombra del Padre", given at the Lara Theater, Madrid, in 1909, was his first independent play. This was followed, in 1910, by "The Mistress of the House" (El Ama de la Casa). He met his first great success with "The Cradle Song" (Canción de Cuna), at the Lara Theater, 1911, given in New York at the Times Square Theater by Augustin Duncan, 1921, and translated by Mr. Underhill. "The Two Shepherds" (Los Pastores), translated into English by Helen and Harley Granville-Barker, and presented in the original at the Lara Theater (1913), was his next distinctive production. Such plays as these, and "The Lover", studies in environment and character, and distinctly idyllic, are a blend of the Quinteros brothers and Benevente.

Plays of a box-office popularity, written by Martínez Sierra, are: "Madame Pepita" (translated by Mr. Underhill and May Heywood Broun), "Mamá", and similarly artificial and thin comedies. Martínez Sierra is the author, likewise, of operetta libretti, like "Las Golondrinas" ("The Swallows" or "Birds of Passage") and the Spanish version of "Pagliacci", with music by Usańdizaga. (See Carl Van Vechten's "Music of Spain", Alfred A. Knopf, New York.)

In 1916, Martínez Sierra became manager of the Eslava Theater, over whose destinies he has since ruled. Mr. Underhill states that his work here has been more of a political and social nature than marked by any æsthetic policy. "The Kingdom of God" (El Reino de Dios, 3 acts, 1916)

is a study of charity, the heroine being in an almshouse, a maternity hospital, and an old people's home. His more recent plays are "The Hope That Is Ours" (Esperanza Nuestra) and "Don Juan de España", 1921, a romantic treatment of the legend.

For so young a man, Martínez Sierra has a startling record of productivity. He has thus far written forty original plays, and has translated from others forty-seven. This does not take into account his work of a general literary character.

THE LOVER

COMEDY IN ONE ACT

BY GREGORIO MARTÍNEZ SIERRA

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY

JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL

Characters

THE QUEEN
THE LOVER
THE LADY IN WAITING

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THE LOVER

Salon in a Royal Palace. The furnishings, while of extreme richness, preserve an atmosphere of simplicity.

The stage is empty when the curtain rises. Loud shouts and cries are heard outside, as if an accident were taking place. Then various noises follow, clamor and confusion. After a moment the Queen enters, followed by a Lady in Waiting. The Queen is a beautiful woman, gowned in faultless taste. She is about forty years of age. Her hair is very dark, except for a solitary white lock which appears almost directly above the middle of her forehead; but she does not attempt to conceal this by any artifice. She enters in full regalia, as if attired for some Court ceremony. From her shoulders hangs the royal mantle.

The Lady in Waiting is about sixty years of age, rather nobly plain. She also is in full Court dress.

THE QUEEN (*as she leaves the Lady in Waiting, who attempts to support her*). No, let me be. — I am not hurt. It is nothing.

LADY IN WAITING. Has Your Majesty suffered no injury?

THE QUEEN. None whatever, I assure you.

LADY IN WAITING. But the shock, the fright — Be seated, Your Majesty. (*She assists her to remove the Court mantle*) Your Majesty must rest. At least drink a glass of water.

THE QUEEN (*seating herself in an arm-chair*). You may bring the water, but without anything in it — pure as God made it.

[*The Lady in Waiting brings the water from a table which stands near by.*

LADY IN WAITING. But Your Majesty, it is cold; Your Majesty is overheated.

THE QUEEN. Give me the glass. (*She takes it from the Lady in Waiting*) You are trembling all over.

LADY IN WAITING. Ah, Your Majesty, you have no idea how frightened I was, how frightened we all were, when the horses reared in the traces! Your Majesty can imagine — the overturn — the coach shattered into pieces — Your Majesty thrown upon the ground.

THE QUEEN (*smiling*). Fortunately there was somebody waiting to receive me. How fortunate that that man — (*laughing*) — my knight errant, was so near!

LADY IN WAITING (*displeased*). Certainly, Your Majesty.

THE QUEEN (*looking at her for a moment, then laughing*). We shall have to award him the Grand Cross. Are you frowning?

LADY IN WAITING. Your Majesty!

THE QUEEN. But what is the matter? What is on your mind?

LADY IN WAITING. Your Majesty, that man was unmannerly and impertinent. Your Majesty will not be displeased, but his deportment was horribly incorrect. To catch Your Majesty in his arms without permission!

THE QUEEN. Yes, if he had allowed me to break my neck, his conduct would have been more correct. In that case he would not have committed a breach of etiquette. No, indeed! It is not every day that a woman, even if she is a queen, is in peril of her life, and has the experience of being saved from death in a gallant's arms.

LADY IN WAITING. Your Majesty amuses herself.

THE QUEEN. Perhaps I do, but I do not wish to be unkind. Poor fellow! However, you may malign him as much as you like.

LADY IN WAITING. Your Majesty, it is not because I like that I suggest that it is incorrect and impertinent for this person to follow Your Majesty wherever you go.

THE QUEEN (*laughing*). Like my shadow!

LADY IN WAITING. Like a rude, ill-bred fellow who is ignorant of decency and of the requirements of etiquette. Your Majesty never leaves the Palace but he is standing on the pavement opposite. You cannot go to church, or to the theater, or visit the parks, or attend any public ceremony but that he is there in the front row, yes, or nearer than the front row, as he was to-day.

THE QUEEN. Fortunately for me.

LADY IN WAITING. Your Majesty, loyal vassals were in attendance to fly to Your Majesty's assistance.

THE QUEEN (*gently*). Yes, so I saw when the horses reared. Half a dozen dukes began to run, but, what with etiquette which kept them at a safe distance and rheumatism which would not permit them to run, my royal person was in grave danger. (*Laughing*) Indeed, if it had not been for him —

LADY IN WAITING. Sulking in a bramble bush, like a lover in comic opera!

THE QUEEN. Love is no respecter of hiding places. It is foolish to laugh at hidden lovers, even in comic opera. Besides, what you say was a bramble bush appeared to me to be a laurel, and men take as naturally to laurels nowadays as they did in the time of Petrarch. Some of the leaves have even clung to my robe. (*Picking off two or three*) Almost enough to weave a crown for my lover.

LADY IN WAITING. Your Majesty surely does not imply that that man is in love?

THE QUEEN. Why not? Don't you think so?

LADY IN WAITING. He is utterly deficient, lacking. Who knows? Perhaps he may be —

THE QUEEN. An anarchist? But how stupid! In the twenty years he has followed me, he never yet has found an opportunity —

LADY IN WAITING (*horrified*). Your Majesty!

THE QUEEN (*laughing*). To show me disrespect.

LADY IN WAITING. Does Your Majesty consider that this extraordinary persecution shows no disrespect?

THE QUEEN. But what has become of him? Where is he?

LADY IN WAITING. He has been detained.

THE QUEEN. Where? For what reason?

LADY IN WAITING. For having introduced himself without permission into the Palace Gardens.

THE QUEEN. To save the life of his Queen! The end justifies the means.

LADY IN WAITING. Your Majesty, he could scarcely have been advised beforehand that Your Majesty's coach was to be overturned, and at that particular spot in the Palace Gardens.

THE QUEEN. Then you do not believe in presentiments?

LADY IN WAITING. Your Majesty, I am too old for such things.

THE QUEEN (*with a note of melancholy in her voice*). So am I — for such things.

LADY IN WAITING. Your Majesty!

THE QUEEN. No, we both know how old I am, and so does the world. Decreeing her age is not among the prerogatives of a queen. (*Taking up a hand-glass, she gazes into it attentively*) Horrible, is it not?

LADY IN WAITING. Your Majesty looks marvelously young.

THE QUEEN. Even so, marvels do not last long. Whenever I look in the mirror I am aghast at the wrinkles which I shall find there very soon. I know, too, where they will come. (*Indicating her eyes and mouth*) They show already when I laugh. Ah, when she is twenty, how carelessly a woman laughs! (*Putting down the mirror*) When I laugh, I cover my face with my fan. When I am forty, I shall have all the Palace mirrors broken. (*She recites simply*)

"When Forty Winters Shall Besiege Thy Brow"

This is one of Shakespeare's sonnets —

"When forty winters shall besiege thy brow
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,

Will be a tatter'd weed, of small worth held:
Then being ask'd where all thy beauty lies,
Where all the treasure of thy lusty days,
To say, within thine own deep-sunken eyes,
Were an ill-eating shame and thriftless praise.
How much more praise deserved thy beauty's use,
If thou couldst answer 'This fair child of mine
Shall sum my count and make my old excuse,'
Proving his beauty by succession thine!
This were to be new made when thou art old,
And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold."

(*Sighing*) I have never had a child!

LADY IN WAITING. Your Majesty! (*Affectionately but disapprovingly*) Your Majesty has no right to think of such a thing.

THE QUEEN. No, of course not. Ah! (*Smiling again*) Do you suppose that he could be a poet?

LADY IN WAITING. Why should he be a poet?

THE QUEEN. Why not? In any case we shall soon discover.

LADY IN WAITING. We shall? How?

THE QUEEN. By asking and hearing his answer.

LADY IN WAITING. Surely Your Majesty does not intend —

THE QUEEN. To receive him? Precisely.

LADY IN WAITING. But Your Majesty, he is nobody.

THE QUEEN. In that case we shall become acquainted more easily. I shall offer him my thanks.

LADY IN WAITING. Your Majesty's Government will thank him officially.

THE QUEEN. But he has saved me personally, and I shall thank him personally. I will receive him now.

LADY IN WAITING. Your Majesty!

THE QUEEN. Is there anything else that you wish?

LADY IN WAITING. Perhaps Your Majesty has changed her mind?

THE QUEEN. No, do not be alarmed. There is nothing to fear. — Ah! And I will receive him alone.

LADY IN WAITING. As Your Majesty commands. [*She goes out.*

[*The Queen again lifts the mirror and gazes into it fixedly. With a woman's instinct, she rearranges her hair; then laughs at herself and lays the mirror down again.*

THE QUEEN. "When forty winters shall besiege thy brow" —

[*The Lady in Waiting and the Lover appear in the doorway. He is forty years of age, neither well nor badly dressed. He wears a black sack suit, his beard is pointed, his hair somewhat long and slightly touched with gray. He comes forward, greatly agitated. The Lady in Waiting retires.*

THE LOVER. Your Majesty!

THE QUEEN. No, come in.

THE LOVER (*advancing a step, then making a reverence*). Your Majesty!

THE QUEEN. Come nearer.

THE LOVER. Your Majesty!

THE QUEEN. I have sent for you to offer my thanks.

THE LOVER. I do not deserve them. Your Majesty will command.

THE QUEEN. A happy chance brought you into the garden.

THE LOVER. Yes, Your Majesty, yes.

THE QUEEN. And I 'm deeply grateful to you.

THE LOVER. No, Your Majesty! No!

THE QUEEN. But I am. Indeed I am!

THE LOVER. Your Majesty will decide.

THE QUEEN. But how is it that you were able to gain admission to the Gardens?

THE LOVER. Very simply.

THE QUEEN. In spite of my guards?

THE LOVER. Your Majesty, it was not the fault of your guards. I climbed the wall at the rear by the plane trees, out of sight of the guards.

THE QUEEN. In broad daylight?

THE LOVER. No, Your Majesty, last night. Your Majesty must not be alarmed —

THE QUEEN. But the wall is very high there. You might have injured yourself.

THE LOVER. No, Your Majesty. I am used to it.

THE QUEEN. Used to it?

THE LOVER. Yes, Your Majesty; on Saturdays. The factory shuts down over Sunday, so I am not obliged to work. I have plenty of time; I can sleep where I like.

THE QUEEN. Do you spend the night in the open air, in the garden?

THE LOVER. It is very pleasant in the summer time.

THE QUEEN. Do you mean that in winter —

THE LOVER. Just the same; yes, Your Majesty. (*She makes a gesture of astonishment*) Only when it freezes, I go into the house with the orang-outang. Your Majesty keeps him now on the further side of the parterre. Don't be alarmed, Your Majesty. We are great friends. He is very fond of tarts and roast chestnuts, so you see there is no danger.

THE QUEEN. Great heaven! Is it possible? Are you in your right mind?

THE LOVER. Yes, Your Majesty.

THE QUEEN. But, my good man, what is the object of exposing yourself in mid-winter in this fashion, in such singular company?

THE LOVER. Your Majesty — really — I don't know whether or not I ought to tell you.

THE QUEEN. But you must!

THE LOVER. Your Majesty, every night before you retire, and when you get up in the morning, Your Majesty comes out upon the terrace before your apartments. In the evening, you look up at the stars; in the morning, you feed the white doves.

THE QUEEN. Yes, I do. Poor things! I like to toss them a few handfuls of corn.

THE LOVER (*interrupting*). Indian corn.

THE QUEEN. How do you know?

THE LOVER. The wind usually carries some grains off the terrace.

THE QUEEN. Do you pick them up?

THE LOVER. Yes, Your Majesty, when I can, which is not often. The paths are swept every morning, so, when night comes, they are no longer there.

THE QUEEN. What? And you keep them?

THE LOVER. Yes, Your Majesty. I have a collection of souvenirs: — the grains of corn; a feather from Your Majesty's hat, which blew out one day while you were driving; a piece of fur from one of Your Majesty's boas, which you wore at the last Carnival — it caught in the railing as Your Majesty left the stand; a coin Your Majesty threw from your coach to a little beggar boy in the street; a tortoise-shell hairpin which fell into the garden one morning along with the corn; a pair of gloves; two of Your Majesty's slippers — I purchased them from a maid of one of the Ladies of the Wardrobe — and I don't know what else! You see, it is a little museum. An Englishman offered me a thousand pounds sterling for it.

THE QUEEN (*interested*). What did you do?

THE LOVER. Your Majesty, the heart is not for sale.

THE QUEEN. You must be very rich.

THE LOVER. No, Your Majesty, I was — that is to say, rich enough; I made a good living. But now, I am poor.

THE QUEEN. Have you been ruined?

THE LOVER. Yes, Your Majesty. But we will not speak of that; it is of no interest to Your Majesty.

THE QUEEN. But it is. It interests me very much. May I ask —

THE LOVER. How I lost my money? Yes, Your Majesty, it is not a secret. Even if it were, since it is Your Majesty — I spent it upon railway tickets, sea voyages, rooms in hotels. Your Majesty is such a great traveler!

THE QUEEN. Were you following me? (*He nods his head in assent*) Preposterous!

THE LOVER. No, Your Majesty, no. Traveling is very

dear. As long as Your Majesty remained in Europe, it was not so bad; but when you made a voyage to India and another to the Fair at Chicago, and immediately after, a pilgrimage to the Holy Land —

THE QUEEN. Did you follow me even as far as India?

THE LOVER. Yes, Your Majesty. Your Majesty will remember that the voyage was undertaken on account of your health. Your Majesty may not know it, but the doctors agreed that it was a question of life and death. It was necessary for you to have a change of climate. Thanks be to God, Your Majesty recovered, but you might have died on the journey. Your Majesty will understand that under the circumstances it was impossible for me to remain in Europe.

THE QUEEN. Impossible!

THE LOVER (*ingenuously*). Absolutely!

THE QUEEN. But I cannot consent to have you spend your fortune like this.

THE LOVER. Your Majesty, do not give it another thought. It was not exactly a gold mine. A few thousands, that was all — the factory which I had the honor to mention to Your Majesty, "The Unrivaled: Makers of Butter and Cheese" — purveyors to Your Majesty, yes, indeed! It was mine; now it belongs to another. That is all.

THE QUEEN. But you — ?

THE LOVER. I am assistant bookkeeper now; I check off the accounts.

THE QUEEN. That must pay you very little.

THE LOVER. Pshaw! Nothing to speak of. It is a humble position. Believe me, Your Majesty, I am capable of much more than that. If not proprietor, I might still have been manager, or foreman at least. Only —

THE QUEEN. Only?

THE LOVER. Only — Your Majesty will not be displeased. I must keep my time free. The fact is — well, I have taken this position because it gives me a living and — (*looking down at his clothes*) — and enough to appear

respectable, because it requires only two hours a day, from half past nine until half past eleven in the morning, precisely the hours at which Your Majesty confers with Your Ministers. Your Majesty will understand —

THE QUEEN (*laughing*). Certainly! At that hour we are both at the office.

THE LOVER. No, no, Your Majesty! Your Majesty misinterprets my meaning. I never presumed to think — the fact is — well, between those hours my mind is freer. I can work without distraction and apply myself; I am sure that Your Majesty will not be upon the streets.

THE QUEEN. How long do you expect to continue this sort of life?

THE LOVER. As long as I am able, Your Majesty, and Your Majesty does not prevent. Your Majesty is not offended at what I have said?

THE QUEEN. Offended? No! But — you must be very unhappy!

THE LOVER. No, Your Majesty, very happy. *Very* happy! That is, not as happy as I was, because now, when Your Majesty leaves Court, I am not always able to travel. Rascally coin! But fortunately, now Your Majesty travels less. It will not do to ask too much of fortune. Your Majesty, after what happened this morning, I — I am repaid for everything that I have suffered in the world. Your Majesty cannot imagine how happy it makes me that — that is, Your Majesty cannot imagine how glad I am that this accident — although I would have given my life to have prevented it — I mean — Your Majesty understands what I mean.

THE QUEEN. Yes, yes, I do. Do not distress yourself. I, too, am glad that it was you —

THE LOVER. Your Majesty!

THE QUEEN. Because — I have noticed your face for so many years. I have seen you for so long a time!

THE LOVER. Your Majesty has noticed me?

THE QUEEN. Naturally.

THE LOVER. Probably Your Majesty thought that I was a photographer for one of the illustrated papers?

THE QUEEN. I thought that you were a poet.

THE LOVER. No, Your Majesty! No! Never!

THE QUEEN. Have you never written verses?

THE LOVER (*disappointed*). Does Your Majesty like verses?

THE QUEEN. Yes, I am very fond of them.

THE LOVER. Goodness gracious! No, Your Majesty, no! Never! Never! (*Brightening*) But I know by heart almost all the verses which have been published about Your Majesty — birthday verses, verses celebrating your victories, your works of charity, and so on, and so on. There are so many of them! Your Majesty of course knows them, too?

THE QUEEN. Not those verses. [*Smiling.*

THE LOVER. God bless us!

THE QUEEN. But you must not be troubled. One may be a poet and yet not write verses.

THE LOVER. Does Your Majesty think so?

THE QUEEN. Certainly. We may write poetry or we may live it. (*Deeply affected*) And devotion and self-denial, illusions and dreaming, the sacrifice of one's life to an ideal, an impossibility — these things are also true poetry, great poetry, are they not?

THE LOVER (*not understanding*). No doubt, Your Majesty, no doubt. Of course, since Your Majesty says so.

THE QUEEN. And you are a great poet of life.

THE LOVER. Your Majesty says so.

THE QUEEN. And I — because you are — in memory of this day, of this event, which also is an extraordinary one in my life, I am going to give you a present to add to that collection which you tell me of, and I hardly know — because of your delicacy, your sacrifices, really — will you accept this remembrance from me?

[*She offers him a jewel which she wears upon her breast.*

THE LOVER. No, no, Your Majesty! No! By no means! Really. Not that jewel! No, no!

THE QUEEN. But why not?

THE LOVER. Because a jewel is — a jewel. That is, it has value — in itself; and — no, Your Majesty! No, no!

THE QUEEN. I did not wish to give offense.

THE LOVER. No, Your Majesty, no! It is not that. It is — the way I feel. A caprice! If Your Majesty would deign to give me some reminder, something personal, perhaps, of no value.

THE QUEEN. As you wish.

THE LOVER. If you would let me have that mirror, Your Majesty, after looking into it, once. (*The Queen looks into the mirror and then hands it to the Lover*) There — Your Majesty! Thanks! Your Majesty will permit me to kiss your hand? (*He kisses it*) Thanks, thanks, Your Majesty! Believe me, Your Majesty — (*Deeply moved*) This is the happiest day of my life.

THE QUEEN. I, too, am greatly obliged to you, and I wish to ask you a favor. If at any time you desire anything, anything which it is within my power to grant, you will do me a great kindness by coming to me.

THE LOVER (*hesitating, wishing to ask something*). Your Majesty!

THE QUEEN. Now — Tell me truly. Is there nothing that you would like?

THE LOVER. Your Majesty! Since Your Majesty has been so kind — If Your Majesty would exert your influence with the Minister of the Interior to have him grant me a pass over the railways of the Kingdom.

THE QUEEN. You shall have it this very day. Is there nothing else? What is your name?

THE LOVER. Matthew, Your Majesty. Matthew Brown, Your Majesty's humble servant.

THE QUEEN (*repeating the words so as to fix them in her memory*). Matthew Brown! You shall have it this afternoon. Now, you may retire. (*She strikes a small silver bell*) And many thanks yet again. (*To the Lady in Waiting, who enters*) Let this gentleman be escorted

to his home, and a note be made of his address. [*She bows, dismissing him.*

THE LOVER. Your Majesty! — (*Bowing very low, he is about to disappear, but as he reaches the door, he turns and says*) It need not be first class. [*Goes out.*

THE QUEEN (*disturbed, pacing up and down the room, without knowing whether to laugh or to cry*). Matthew Brown! Matthew Brown! (*To the Lady in Waiting, who reënters*) Has he gone?

LADY IN WAITING. Yes, Your Majesty. But Your Majesty is unwell! Has this man given offense? He has been impertinent —

THE QUEEN. No! No! On the contrary. Poor fellow!

LADY IN WAITING. Was he a poet?

THE QUEEN. A poet? No. That is — yes, in his way. Imagine — but how can you imagine? My God! This poor man has given his life for me, for to him his cheese factory was his life. Four centuries ago he would have fought under my banners, he would have conquered a kingdom for my sake, he would have discovered a new world and have laid it at my feet, and now — now, to see me feed corn to the doves, he sleeps in a cage with the orang-outang! And his name is Matthew Brown — Matthew Brown, the LOVER. The poet was right: — We have been born too late into a world which has grown too old!

CURTAIN

SIMOOM

JOHANN AUGUST STRINDBERG
(1849–1912)

STRINDBERG was a mad genius. His work is largely autobiographical, and the cerebral condition of his novels and plays reflects the cerebral condition of the man. His childhood was bitter, his university days marked by poverty. His rearing was of the worst, and his temperamental rebelliousness can be easily accounted for, as easily as his acceptance of the philosophy of Nietzsche. His father's free union with a servant girl, with himself as the issue, did not add any enviable qualities to his background. But he could boast that his grandfather was a dramatist; from him probably came the literary inheritance.

Strindberg was born at Stockholm, January 22, 1849. At the age of eight he had attempted suicide for a supposed love affair; the next time he tried such an ending, it was because of his failure as an actor (1869). A strange mixture of piety and rebelliousness, of acceptance and denial of authority, he early met misfortune at school, and this ill-luck followed him to the university of Upsala. During this time, as a source of income, he "supered" at the theater and tutored in a Jewish family, where he became interested in medicine. Here, likewise, given an opportunity to associate with artistic people, he turned his thoughts seriously to the stage.

1870 ushered in his prolific career as a writer, with a one-act play, "In Rome", and "The Outlaw", which gained for him financial reward from King Carl XV. In 1872 came "Master Olaf." Not successful as a journalist, he was ap-

pointed as assistant at the Royal Library, where his quick mind was attracted to the study of Chinese, and where he wrote scientific treatises that gained for him a solid recognition.

His unfortunate essayal of marriage began in 1877, with the divorced wife of Baron Krangel; now started his strange development of a peculiar sex antagonism which fought brutally for the supremacy of man. Read in order "The Bondwoman's Son", with its peculiar imperiousness and pride, which developed from his lowly beginnings; "The Red Room", dealing negatively with the cultural conditions of his time; and "Marriage", wherein one detects his declaration against what he considered to be a woman cult begun by Henrik Ibsen. He refers, in characteristic phrasing, to Ibsen's Nora as the "silly romantic provincialism" of an "epicene squaw." By 1890, when he wrote "At the Edge of the Sea", Strindberg had clearly formulated the philosophy of the individualistic Superman championed by Nietzsche.

Holding such views as he did of women, estrangement developed between Strindberg and his wife; and, in 1892, a divorce was granted. In 1893, he married Frida Uhl, an Austrian writer; his third venture took place in 1901, with Harriet Bosse, a Norwegian actress, whose portrait was outlined in the historical play, "Christine."

This strenuous madman seemed to have method in his madness. Would you know the symptoms of his peculiar disease, read "Inferno", "Legends", and "Alone"; also his earlier "A Fool's Confession" (1888). Would you know the delicacy of his imagination, turn to his "Lucky-Pehr." And, in order to glean something of his original attitude toward the theater, master his preface to "Miss Julia."

He was the champion of the one-act play, author of "The Stronger", "Pariah", "Debit and Credit", "Mother-Love", "The Burned Lot", "Simoom", "The Spook Sonata" and "The Storm." Despite his diatribes against Ibsen, he was under his influence when he wrote "Master Olaf" and "The

Secret of the Guild." Could we not trace his detestation of Ibsen to the fact that he thought "The Wild Duck" pilloried him; hence his belief that Ibsen was no better than a spy on his fellow worker? Some think that "Lucky-Pehr" suggested to Maeterlinck the fundamentals of "The Blue Bird"; others believe that the Belgian influenced him in his fairy and dream plays.

Strindberg left much material by which his psychological measure may be taken. He was unhappy, passionately tenacious of generalizations, violently assertive; his very features — handsome and individualistic — suggested the inconsequent brilliancy of the man, his inner restlessness. Even in his scientific interest he was speculatively dreamy, and experimented along lines of greatest dispute. The realistic shock of many of his plays raised violent and continual protest. Yet, when Strindberg died, May 14, 1912, there was nation-wide grief over the passing of so great a genius.

Archibald Henderson writes:

"His life-work is essentially moral in its nature; his nature was essentially Christian. However splenetic and arrogant his mood, however jaundiced and *macabre* his tone, we nevertheless recognize in him a supreme artist, whose ideal was cultural development; a moral force in the universe, seeking the ultimate redemption of the human soul."

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SIMOOM

BY AUGUST STRINDBERG

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF
EMIL SCHERING BY

MARY HARNED

Characters

BISKRA, Arabian maiden
YOUSSEF, her lover
GUIMARD, Lieutenant of Zouaves

In Algiers, in our day

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SIMOOM

An Arabian marabout's burial chamber with a sarcophagus in the center on the ground. Here and there, prayer rugs; in the right corner, a charnel-house. Door in the background with curtains; window-openings in the back wall. Little heaps of sand here and there on the ground; an aloe that has been torn up, palm leaves and alfa-grass in a heap.

Biskra enters, the hood of her burnoose drawn over her face, and a guitar on her back; throws herself down on a rug and says a prayer, her arms crossed over her breast.

Outside, the wind blows.

BISKRA. *La ilaha ill allah!*

YOUSSEF (*enters hurriedly*). The simoom is coming. Where is the Frenchman?

BISKRA. He will be here in a minute.

YOUSSEF. Why did you not strike him down at once?

BISKRA. I did not, because he must do it himself. If I had done it, the white men would kill our whole race, for they know that I was the guide, Ali, although they do not know that I am the maiden, Biskra.

YOUSSEF. He must do it himself? How shall that come to pass?

BISKRA. You do not know that the simoom parches the brains of the white men like dates, and that they see terrible things, which make life so hateful to them that they rush out into the great unknown.

YOUSSEF. I have heard something of this kind, and at the time of the last engagement, six Frenchmen laid violent hands on themselves before they reached their destination. But do not rely on the simoom to-day, for snow has fallen

on the mountains, and in half an hour all may be over. — Biskra! Can you still hate?

BISKRA. Can I hate? — My hatred is boundless as the desert, burning as the sun and stronger than my love. Every moment of enjoyment, which they stole from me when they killed Ali, has gathered like the poison under the tooth of the viper, and what the simoom cannot do, I can do.

YOUSSEF. Well said, Biskra, and you will accomplish it. My hatred has withered like the alfa-grass in autumn, since my eyes have seen you. Take of my strength, and be the arrow to my bow.

BISKRA. Embrace me, Youssef! Embrace me!

YOUSSEF. Not here, in the presence of the holy one; not now — later, afterward. When you have earned your reward!

BISKRA. Proud sheik, proud man!

YOUSSEF. Yes — the maiden who shall bear my offspring beneath her heart must prove herself worthy of that honor.

BISKRA. I — no other — will bear Youssef's offspring. I, Biskra — the despised, the hideous, but the strong.

YOUSSEF. So be it! Now, I go down to sleep beside the spring. — Need I teach you the secret arts, you learned from the great marabout, Sidi-sheik, and have practiced in the markets since you were a child?

BISKRA. You do not need to. — I know all the secrets necessary to scare a cowardly Frenchman out of his life; the coward who creeps upon his enemy and sends his lead balls in advance of him. I know everything — even to ventriloquism. And what my arts cannot accomplish, the sun will, for the sun is with Youssef and Biskra.

YOUSSEF. The sun is the Moslem's friend, but there is no dependence to be placed on him: you may burn yourself, girl. Take a drink of water, for I see that your hands shrivel up and — [*Has taken up a rug and now goes down for a bowl of water which he hands to Biskra.*

BISKRA (*puts the bowl to her lips*). And my eyes begin to

look red — my lungs to grow parched — I hear — I hear — you see, the sand is even now sifting through the roof — and the strings of the guitar sing — the simoom is here! But the Frenchman is not!

YOUSSEF. Come down here, Biskra, and let the Frenchman die by himself.

BISKRA. First hell and then death! Did you think I would falter? (*Pours the water out on a heap of sand*) I will water the sand, then revenge will grow. And I will dry up my heart. Grow, hate! Burn, sun! Suffocate, wind!

YOUSSEF. Hail to thee, Ibn Youssef's mother, for thou wilt bear Youssef's son, the revenger! Hail!

[*The wind increases; the curtain before the door blows in; the room is illuminated by a red glow which, during the following, changes to yellow.*

BISKRA. The Frenchman is coming, and — the simoom is here! — Go!

YOUSSEF. In half an hour you will see me again. There is your hour-glass. (*Points to a sand heap*) The sky measures time even for the hell of the unbelievers.

GUIMARD (*enters, pale, staggering and confused; he speaks in a half whisper*). The simoom is here! Where do you think my comrades have gone?

BISKRA. I led your comrades westward toward the east.

GUIMARD. Westward toward — the east. — Let me see. — Yes, that's right, in the east and — westward. — Let me sit down on a chair, and give me some water.

BISKRA (*leads Guimard to a sand heap; makes him lie down on the ground with his head on the sand heap*). Are you comfortably seated?

GUIMARD (*looks at her*). I am seated a little crooked. Put something under my head.

BISKRA (*arranges the sand under his head*). There, now you have a cushion under your head.

GUIMARD. My head? My feet are certainly there! — Are n't my feet there?

BISKRA. Certainly they are.

GUIMARD. I thought so. — Well, now give me a footstool under — my head.

BISKRA (*drags up the aloe and puts it under Guimard's knees*). There, there 's a footstool for you.

GUIMARD. And then, water! — Water!

BISKRA (*takes up the empty bowl, fills it with sand, and hands it to Guimard*). Drink, while it is cold.

GUIMARD (*sips from the bowl*). It is cold — but it doesn't quench my thirst. — I cannot drink — I loathe water — take it away.

BISKRA. That is that dog that bit you.

GUIMARD. What dog? I have never been bitten by a dog.

BISKRA. The simoom has made your memory shrivel up, — beware of the delusions of the simoom! Don't you remember the mad greyhound that bit you on the next to the last hunt in Bab-el-Qued?

GUIMARD. On the hunt in Bab-el-Qued? Yes, that 's right! — Was it beaver-colored? —

BISKRA. A bitch? Yes! There, you see! And she bit you in the calf of your leg. Don't you feel how the wound stings?

GUIMARD (*feels for the calf of his leg; sticks himself on the aloe.*) Yes, I feel it. — Water! Water!

BISKRA (*hands him the bowl of sand*). Drink! drink!

GUIMARD. No, I cannot! Holy Virgin, Mother of God! — I have hydrophobia!

BISKRA. Do not be alarmed. I will cure you and drive out the demon by the power of music. Listen!

GUIMARD (*screams*). Ali! Ali! Not music! I can't bear it! And what sort of use can it be to me?

BISKRA. Music tames the malevolent spirit of the snake; do you not believe that it can rule the spirit of a mad dog? Listen! (*Sings to the guitar*) Biskra-Biskra, Biskra-Biskra, Biskra-Biskra. Simoom! Simoom!

YOUSSEF (*from below*). Simoom! Simoom!

GUIMARD. What are you singing? Ali!

BISKRA. Was I singing? Look at me, I shall put a palm-

leaf in my mouth. (*Takes a palm branch between her teeth. Song from above*) Biskra-Biskra, Biskra-Biskra, Biskra-Biskra.

YOUSSEF (*from below*). Simoom! Simoom!

GUIMARD. What hellish delusion is this?

BISKRA. Now I shall sing.

BISKRA and YOUSSEF (*together*). Biskra-Biskra, Biskra-Biskra, Biskra-Biskra! Simoom!

GUIMARD (*springs up*). Who are you, you devil, who sing with two voices? Are you a man or a woman? Or both?

BISKRA. I am Ali, the guide. You do not recognize me, because your senses are bewildered; but if you wish to escape from your delusions of eye and mind, believe me, believe what I say, and do what I command.

GUIMARD. You do not need to ask me to believe, for I see that everything is just as you say it is.

BISKRA. Now you see, idolater.

GUIMARD. Idolater?

BISKRA. Yes! Take out the idol that you carry on your breast!

[*Guimard pulls out a medallion.*

BISKRA. Tread it under foot and call on God, the only true God, the merciful, the compassionate.

GUIMARD (*hesitating*). Saint Edward, my patron saint!

BISKRA. Can he protect you? Can he?

GUIMARD. No, he cannot! — (*Aroused*) Yes, he can!

BISKRA. We will see.

[*Opens the door; the curtain blows and the grass stirs.*

GUIMARD (*holds his hand over his mouth*). Shut the door!

BISKRA. Down with your idol!

GUIMARD. No, I cannot.

BISKRA. Look, the simoom does not touch a hair of my head, but you, unbeliever, it kills! Down with your idol!

GUIMARD (*throws the medallion on the ground*). Water! I am dying!

BISKRA. Pray to the only true God, the merciful, the compassionate!

GUIMARD. How shall I pray?

BISKRA. Say the words after me.

GUIMARD. Speak!

BISKRA. God is the only true God, there is no other God but him, the merciful, the compassionate!

GUIMARD. "God is the only true God, there is no other God but him, the merciful, the compassionate"!

BISKRA. Lie down on the ground. (*Guimard lies down reluctantly*) What do you hear?

GUIMARD. I hear a spring gurgling.

BISKRA. Now you see! God is the only true God, and there is no other God but him, the merciful, the compassionate! — What do you see?

GUIMARD. I see a stream gurgling — I hear a lamp shining — in a window with green shutters, — on a white street. —

BISKRA. Who sits at the window?

GUIMARD. My wife — Elise.

BISKRA. Who stands behind the curtain and puts his arm around her neck?

GUIMARD. That is my son — George.

BISKRA. How old is your son?

GUIMARD. Four years, on Saint Nicholas day.

BISKRA. And he can already stand behind the curtain, and put his arm around the neck of another man's wife?

GUIMARD. He cannot — but it is he!

BISKRA. Four years old, with a blond moustache!

GUIMARD. A blond moustache, did you say? — Oh, that is — Julius, my friend.

BISKRA. And he stands behind the curtain and puts his arm around your wife's neck!

GUIMARD. Oh, the devil!

BISKRA. Do you see your son?

GUIMARD. No, I no longer see him.

BISKRA (*imitates the ringing of bells on her guitar*). What do you see now?

GUIMARD. I see the ringing of bells — and I feel the taste of a corpse — it smells in my mouth like rancid butter — ugh!

BISKRA. Don't you hear the deacons singing, as they carry the body of a child to the grave?

GUIMARD. Wait! — I cannot hear it — (*dejectedly*) but if you wish it? — There — now I hear it!

BISKRA. Do you see the wreath on the coffin they are carrying between them?

GUIMARD. Yes.

BISKRA. There is a violet ribbon on it — and on the ribbon is printed in silver — "Farewell, my beloved George! — Thy Father."

GUIMARD. Yes, there it is! — (*Weeps*) My George! George! My beloved child! — Elise, my wife, comfort me! — Help me! (*Feels around him*) Where are you? Elise! Have you left me? Answer! Speak the name of your beloved!

A VOICE (*from the roof*). Julius! Julius!

GUIMARD. Julius. — My name, yes — what is my name? — Charles is my name. — And she calls Julius. — Elise — dear wife — answer me, for your spirit is here, — I feel it — and you solemnly promised me never to love any one else —

[*The voice laughs.*

GUIMARD. Who laughs?

BISKRA. Elise! Your wife!

GUIMARD. Kill me! — I do not want to live any longer. I loathe life as I do sauerkraut in Saint-Doux — do you know what Saint-Doux is? Pig's fat. (*Spits*) I have no spittle — Water! Water! If you don't give it to me, I shall bite you.

[*Full fury of the storm without.*

BISKRA (*keeps her mouth closed and coughs*). Now, you are dying, Frenchman! Write your last will, while there is yet time. — Where is your note-book?

GUIMARD (*pulls out a note-book and pen*). What shall I write?

BISKRA. A man thinks of his wife when he is dying — and of his children.

GUIMARD (*writes*). "Elise — I curse you! Simoom — I am dying —"

BISKRA. Now sign it, or it will be worth nothing.

GUIMARD. How shall I sign it?

BISKRA. Write: "*La ilaha ill allah!*"

GUIMARD (*writes*). It is written. May I die now?

BISKRA. Now you may die, a cowardly soldier, who has deserted his comrades. — And you shall have a beautiful funeral; jackals shall sing your body to its grave. (*Beats the attack on the guitar*) Do you hear the drums calling — to the attack — the unbelievers who have the simoom and the sun with them, push forward — out of their ambush — (*Strikes her guitar*) The shots fall along the whole line — the French are not able to load again — the Arabs send scattered shots — the French flee!

GUIMARD (*starts up*). The French do not flee!

BISKRA (*blows the retreat on a flute which she has drawn forth*). The French flee when the retreat is blown.

GUIMARD. They retreat — it is the retreat — and I am here — (*Tears off his epaulettes*) I am dead.

[*Falls to the ground.*

BISKRA. Yes, you are dead. — You do not know it, but you have been dead a long time. —

[*Goes to the charnel-house; takes out a skull.*

GUIMARD. Am I dead? [*Clutches his face.*

BISKRA. A long time! A long time! — See yourself in this mirror.

[*Shows him the skull.*

GUIMARD. Ah! That is I.

BISKRA. Don't you see your prominent cheek-bones — don't you see how the vultures have eaten out your eyes — don't you recognize the hole made when you had that double tooth drawn on the right side — don't you see the dimple in your chin, where your little pointed beard grew, that your Elise loved to stroke — don't you see where your ear was, the ear that your George used to kiss in the morning at breakfast — don't you see where the axe was applied to your neck — when the hangman beheaded the deserter!

[*Guimard, who has looked and listens with horror, falls down dead.*

BISKRA (*who has been on her knees, rises after she has examined his pulse. Sings*). Simoom! Simoom! (*Opens the door; the draperies flutter; she holds her hand over her mouth and falls over backward*) *Youssef!*

[*Youssef comes up from below.*

YOUSSEF (*examines Guimard; looks for Biskra*). Biskra! (*Sees Biskra; lifts her up in his arms*) Are you alive?

BISKRA. Is the Frenchman dead?

YOUSSEF. If he is not, he soon will be. Simoom! Simoom!

BISKRA. Then I live. But give me water.

YOUSSEF (*carries her to the steps*). Here! — Now, Youssef is thine!

BISKRA. And Biskra will be the mother of thy son! Youssef, great Youssef!

YOUSSEF. Strong Biskra! Stronger than the Simoom!

CURTAIN

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